Cultivating Change:
Optimizing Farmers' Markets in Ontario

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Abstract

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The global food system has been criticized for being environmentally, economically and socially unsustainable. As part of a local food movement, farmers' markets (FM) are undergoing a revival in response to the escalating food system globalization of the past century. Despite the prevalence of FMs as formalized organizations, there remains a significant range in their operational strategies. Through 41 questionnaires and 17 interviews with market administrators across Ontario, in collaboration with the Haliburton County Farmers' Market Association, I explored these strategies and analyzed the influence of community characteristics on FM operations. Factors that appear to have a significant impact on FM governance and management are market size and age, willingness to adapt to change, and relationships with external organizations. My findings suggest that democratic vendor engagement and documentation of procedural systems can help optimize market administration. In terms of vendor relationships, primary concerns include regulation of resellers, diplomatic vendor pool design, and creation of a collaborative atmosphere. As well, I conclude that customers are best viewed as socially invested stakeholders with a strong interest in learning about local food production.

Keywords: farmers' markets, global food system, local food systems, Ontario farmers' markets, sustainability

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Context

The growth of globalized food production and distribution has been questioned in terms of the sustainability of a food system that externalizes its environmental and social repercussions. The modern global food system has been praised for its technological capacity to feed an ever-expanding human population, but it is also associated with what some have called a mounting food crisis (Akram-Lohdi, 2013; Holt-Gimenez and Altieri, 2013, Van Der Ploeg, 2010). The current global food system is nested in a set of complex and formidable problems: persistent hunger in the face of food surpluses, mounting obesity and diet-related illness, rampant food waste, climate change and associated weather events, biodiversity loss, pollution, pollinator endangerment, watershed depletion, soil degradation, spikes in farmer suicides in the developing world, and so on (Akram-Lhodi, 2013; Patel, 2013; Roberts, 2009). These problems are contributing to a “perfect storm” of global food insecurity (Bello, 2009, p. 4).

In response to this storm, scholars, activists and eaters have been investigating alternatives that might reverse some of these trends. In particular, food system localization has been proposed as having the potential for greater environmental, economic, and social sustainability. While local food systems do not represent an infallible solution to an extremely complex problem, they are shown to provide some opportunities for enhancing community-level ecological resilience, social wellbeing, and economic viability. As a central feature of local food systems, farmers' markets in particular, exemplify some of these opportunities.

My research, undertaken in collaboration with the Haliburton County Farmers' Market Association (HCFMA), examines farmers' markets in Ontario, in order to enhance understanding of farmers' market structures and performance. To provide context, I begin by exploring the defining characteristics of farmers' markets, tracing their history in North America, and outlining their role in the movement toward local food system sustainability.

Objectives and Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to evaluate the range of farmers' market (FM) operational strategies in Ontario in order to discover best practices regarding governance and management and vendor and customer relationships, given the unique communities that each FM serves. The research questions were designed to address these objectives with priority given to areas of interest to the HCFMA. The questions are:

1. *What is the optimal type of governance structure for farmers' markets? What community characteristics are critical in determining this? What is the relationship, if any, between governance structure and size of market?*

2. *What type of management structure is most efficient and effective? What is the relationship, if any, between management structure, size of market, and type of community?*
3. *What is the most productive relationship with/among the vendors? What is the relationship, if any, between vendor characteristics, size of market, and type of community?*
4. *What is the most productive relationship with consumers? What is the relationship, if any, between the characteristics of a market's customers, size of market, and type of community?*

Insofar as the research was undertaken collaboratively and the HCFMA provided the impetus for the study, the group can be considered as the *host organization*, a designation that will be used throughout this thesis.

Rationale for Community-Based Research

Community-based research intersects with participatory action research and service learning in that the community members involved contribute directly to the research process. They take part in some or all of the phases of study, from setting the research agenda and designing the research instruments, to evaluating the validity and facilitating the dissemination of the results (Jay, 2010; Stephenson, 2008). A community-based approach suited my own objective of developing a project that would address a need identified by community members themselves, and provide them with the means to make informed decisions. In writing about FM success and failure, Stephenson (2008) notes the need for academics and community groups to work in tandem to reform a troubled food system. He goes on to stress the importance of producing research that clearly communicates its findings to the people and practitioners being studied. This appeal comes in response to a tradition of social science and humanities research that has often alienated research subjects through the use of inaccessible jargon and abstract rhetoric (Brown, 2002; Reardon, 1998). Producing academic work that is inclusive of the associated community groups is especially critical in cases of what Creswell (2014) calls research with "an action agenda for reform" (p. 38). Although this study is primarily descriptive, the secondary objectives are to discover best practices, identify barriers to success, and provide helpful information that could be shared among a network of FMs, giving them the opportunity to learn from one another's victories and challenges.

Community-based research is further supported by Thomas Lyson (2004), who asserts that direct involvement of community members in local problem-solving is a defining characteristic of civic agriculture and the driving force behind food system reform. Furthermore, some food systems scholars make the case that social scientists and academics studying food system sustainability have a role and even an obligation to actively strive to solve the problems and injustices playing out in the agri-food realm (Allen, 2008; Constance, 2008; Friedland, 2008; Jay, 2010; Reardon, 1998). Research with an action agenda has tended to involve marginalized communities and has sought to bring about social reform (Creswell, 2014; Reardon, 1998). While it may be a stretch to characterize FMs as marginalized or oppressed entities, FMs help address a larger system of marginalization. The underlying motivation for my research stems from a desire to address some of the injustices in the global food system, including the reported widespread oppression that it engenders, particularly among small-scale food producers and entrepreneurs. Therefore, investigating strategies for strengthening the resilience of FMs helps to protect and reinforce these crucial sites of food system reform.

Clarification of Terminology

Throughout this thesis, I will refer to a number of concepts whose definitions can be ambiguous and are often disputed in the literature. The following section aims to clarify how these concepts will be represented herein.

***Food System*:** A food system refers to all activities, actors and products involved in the food cycle from seed and soil, to factory and market, to kitchen and dinner plate, to landfill and compost bin (Kloppenburg et al., 2000). It includes the material infrastructure required to produce a hamburger or a slice of cheese, as well as intangible elements like skills, traditions, organizations, enterprises, and sociocultural interactions associated with food (Gillespie et al., 2007). It also encompasses the financial and logistical intricacies of food retailing, agricultural futures trading, advertising and marketing.

***Globalization (and the Global Food System)*:** This term broadly refers to the economic activities and networks that have their origins in the era of colonial conquest, and were later developed by leaders of industrialized nations in the post-war era. The restructuring of manufacturing, markets, and trade routes following the Second World War was designed to rehabilitate war-ravaged countries, liberate and stimulate trade, and spur development in the Global South (Norberg-Hodge, Merrifield and Gorelick, 2002). Since that time, globalization is described as the ongoing “integration of national economies into one giant global economy through trade and investment rules and privatization, aided by technological advances, and driven by corporate power” (Lucas, 2003, p. 261). Lucas (2003) adds to this definition, emphasizing the dominant role of transnational corporations, and the advancement of what she and others have called “a consumer monoculture” (Lucas, 2003, p. 261; Norberg-Hodge, 2003, p. 258). Globalization is conceptually complex and can take several forms, impacting not only economic structures, but social, political, environmental and ethical ones as well (Shanahan et al., 2003). Globalization as it pertains to the food system involves an increasingly concentrated agri-business network establishing sites of low-cost production across the planet in order to realize maximum efficiency and profits (Lapping, 2004). It also involves multinational trade agreements, vast distribution channels and volatile systems of financial speculation and market fluctuations with far-reaching consequences (Van der Ploeg, 2010).

***Localization (and Local Food Systems)*:** The terms localization, re-localization and regionalization are not used interchangeably, but they refer to closely related concepts with varying degrees of specificity. While these terms appear unambiguous on the surface, their meaning has been widely debated among food system academics. Localization, according to Lucas (2003), is the effort to "meet basic needs from closer to home" (p. 263). The simplicity of this statement and growing interest in the notion of localization, particularly among sustainability scholars, requires that it be expanded and analyzed further. A portion of the literature on food systems has tended to associate 'local' with notions of quality and goodness, a tendency that has prompted opposition (Ilbery and Kneafsey, 2000; Winter, 2003). Indeed, Hinrichs (2003) cautions against over-simplified and value-laden characterizations of food system localization as "good, progressive and desirable" (p. 33), prescribing instead a critical examination of this multi-faceted concept. DuPuis and Goodman (2005) further challenge "unreflexive localism" (p. 359), noting the tendency among food system analysts to romanticize the notion of local food, and to impose a set of norms and standards that deny the intricacies of local politics and practices. Furthermore, as the local food movement has taken hold, the promotional impact of the word 'local' has been seized upon by food corporations and marketing firms, with little concern as to its underlying intention. An example of this can be found in Ontario, where 'local food' under the Foodland Ontario brand can refer to products coming from anywhere in a province that covers approximately one million square kilometers (Smithers, Lamarche, and Joseph, 2008).

Re-localization, an alternate term used in reference to food systems, is meant to acknowledge the historical precedent of local economies and to describe recent efforts to insulate communities from the instability of the global economic system (Hendrickson and Heffernan, 2002; Lyson and Green, 1999). Additionally, the term 'local' may be substituted with 'regional' or even 'community' in an effort to clarify the concept (Byker et al., 2012; Mount et al., 2013). 'Community' calls to mind a group of people united by geographic proximity, social norms, or kinship, but the complexity of meaning infused in this word make it just as semantically problematic as 'local' (Liepins, 2000). Similarly, 'region' vaguely refers to an undefined geographical area, and does not denote a spatial range (as with the popular '100 mile diet') but rather, an area defined by particular social, political, and/or biophysical features (Kneafsey, 2010; Smith and MacKinnon, 2007). For example the Niagara region is comprised of the majority of the Niagara peninsula and includes 12 municipalities, covering almost 2000 square kilometres, while the Haliburton region, containing only 4 municipalities, refers to Haliburton County and is defined by the county boundaries (over 4000 square kilometres). Hinrichs (2003) challenges the terms 'local' and 'regional', noting that "specific social or environmental relations do not always map predictably and consistently onto the spatial relation" (p. 36).

To confuse matters further, Thomas Lyson, a long-time advocate for re-localization of food systems, describes ‘regionalized’ agriculture as specialized production whereby a particular region (e.g. the Great Lakes states) employs a “comparative advantage” to occupy niche markets for which they are particularly suited (Lyson, 2004, p. 3). Used in this way, the term describes the very system of centralization that local food advocates criticize.

‘Foodshed’ is another term used in local food systems analysis, which likens the production and distribution of food to processes of natural resource management within ecological boundaries (Horst and Gaolach, 2015). However, just as ‘local’ fails to conjure a clear-cut definition, ‘foodshed’ can be used to signify any degree of localness, and is especially ambiguous given that the flows of food resources are not currently bound by ecological limitations.

For the purposes of this paper, food system localization is adequately defined as the “attempt to counteract trends of economic concentration, social disempowerment, and environmental degradation in the food and agricultural landscape” (Hinrichs, 2003, p. 33). The precise boundaries to which ‘local’ or ‘regional’ refer are less important here, than the ways in which a localized food system differs from the global food system and the sustainability implications of each.

***Sustainability*:** Decades of research into the notion of sustainability have resulted in an impressive effort to define and explore its many facets. A widely accepted definition typically references ‘sustainable development’, defined in the 1987 publication of the Brundtland Commission as development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Economic Development, 1987, p. 15). Later interpretations went on to highlight the importance of considering the "three pillars" (United Nations, 2002, p. 54) of social, environmental, and economic aspects of sustainability. And more recently, cultural sustainability was added as an important and distinct aspect of social life deserving of its own pillar (Duxbury, and Gillette, 2007). However, just as 'local' has become shorthand for 'superior' and 'ethical' and has been exploited for its marketing clout, the 'sustainability' banner is also proudly exhibited in the promotional materials of such companies as Monsanto, an agribusiness giant among the most dominant in the industry and known for their dubious ethical and environmental practices (Kloppenburg et al., 2000; "Who We Are", 2015). Therefore, a more precise understanding of sustainability as it pertains to the food system must preclude cooptation by the very entities against which local food initiatives are resisting (Jaffee and Howard, 2010). In an effort to do just that, Kloppenburg et al. (2000) conducted a study whereby "food system activists, farmers, small-business people, and citizen-eaters" (p. 180) amassed a list of attributes of a sustainable food system. Some of the qualities listed include: ecologically sustaining, economically viable, ethical and socially acceptable, diverse (including biological and sociocultural diversity), proximate (local), relational (face-to-face), health promoting, and participatory (Kloppenburg, 2000). As each of these is a nuanced concept that deserves a closer look, I will examine them further as I explore the role of the farmers' market in a sustainable food system.

Farmers' Market **(FM):** When asked to imagine a FM, many readers will conjure a clear mental image – likely in an outdoor setting with any number of tents and stalls from which farm products are sold by friendly vendors. Studying the role of FMs in today's food system, however, requires that we consider more specifically what constitutes a FM. Brown (2001), noted the inconsistency in FM research arising from the use of terms like "'public' or 'municipal markets,' 'terminal markets,' 'farm shops,' 'farm stands,' 'curb' or 'tailgate markets,' 'flea markets,' and 'swap meets'" (p. 658). In Ontario, in order to earn official status as a true FM, one must retain a vendor pool with a majority of primary agricultural producers. Beyond this requirement, FMs can be designed in any number of unique ways. The definition of FMs and the diversity the term entails will be explored further in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2: The History of Farmers' Markets and their Shifting Definition

Introduction

Farmers' markets (FM) are being revived in many parts of the world that have experienced an escalating globalization of their food systems in the past century. The reasons for this renaissance and its impact on regional food system sustainability are various and complex. This chapter aims to establish the historical foundation for modern FMs in North America, and to examine the way historical food trade patterns have shaped the current drive to define the parameters of FM authenticity. In outlining the history of FMs, I trace their trajectory from establishment and expansion during European settlement of North America, through a period of decline and virtual disappearance stemming from the rise of supermarkets and long-distance transport, to the current phase of resurgence and redefinition. This historical exploration relies heavily on Michael Basil's (2012) unique history of FMs in Canada. Expanding on the recent resurgence, I describe some of the characteristics of modern FMs, touching on the functions they serve for both producers and consumers. As well, I address some of the modern challenges FMs face from corporate co-optation to internal political conflicts, and I explore how such challenges are shaping efforts to define what constitutes an authentic FM. Despite these ongoing obstacles and the struggles to compete with food system industrialization, the FM has proven to be an exceptionally resilient alternative within the globalized food complex. As integral features of sustainable local food systems, FMs are particularly worthy of critical analysis and preservation.

Farmers' Markets in Ancient History

The marketing of agricultural goods is believed to have originated in ancient Greece and Rome. The modern FM, broadly defined as a commercial outlet for the periodic sale and purchase of agricultural goods, among other products, can be traced back 2,500 years or more to the Greek Agora and the Roman Forum (Basil, 2012; Pyle, 1971). These ancient marketplaces occurred in centralized gathering spaces where a variety of social, political and economic activities played out. At the Agora in Athens, for instance, citizens (almost exclusively males) could engage in religious and philosophical discussions, settle political disputes, attend a theatrical performance, and purchase food, pottery and textiles (Fantham, 2009; Encyclopædia Britannica, 1998). This composite of functions can still be found in today's FMs where shoppers can enjoy live music, engage in political debate with neighbours, and purchase a wide array of foods, crafts and artisanal products.

Developing out of these early prototypes, various models of markets evolved across the globe according to cultural customs, production flows, and consumption needs. Historical records suggest that government involvement in the operation of markets has been a mainstay throughout much of their existence (Pyle, 1971). Kings, senates or city officials determined weights and measures, fair prices, product taxes, market location, hours of operation, and other administrative details. These agents also resolved conflicts among and between vendors and customers. As markets gained popularity, disputes with the broader community, including representatives of various business interests became more prevalent. Landowners, merchants, and even church authorities wanted a stake in the success of markets and a policy-making role in their administration (Pyle, 1971; Robinson and Hartenfeld, 2007). Governance structures differed from market to market, a tendency that persists today, and despite their historical longevity, optimal management strategies for FMs have yet to be widely analyzed (Brown, 2002; Stephenson, Lev and Brewer, 2008).

The Rise of Farmers' Markets in North America

While FMs took various forms in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and the Americas, it is the European model that is most familiar in North America, as this style of market was imported during the colonial era. Indigenous communities in the New World had their own well-established trade and market traditions, and in some instances following European contact, amicable trade took place according to native custom. However, in most cases, indigenous markets were soon replaced with the European models that were familiar to the settlers (Robinson and Hartenfeld, 2007). Histories of FMs in both the US and Canada follow a similar trajectory based on the waves of immigration taking place in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. Once immigrant populations reached a tipping point, FMs were established to address the alimentary needs of communities concentrating in towns and villages (Hamilton, 2002). Over the next 200 years, FMs became institutionalized, highly regulated, and recognized as being essential to the prosperity of developing cities (Basil, 2012).

Early FMs in North America, as was often the case in Europe, principally took the form of open-air, public markets that were centrally located and open for business only a few days per week. The first FMs to appear in the US were established in Boston and New York. Though there are conflicting records as to which of these was established first, they are said to have developed between 1634 and 1658 (Pyle, 1971; Shakow, 1981). As far as which Canadian cities hold the distinction of having established the first FMs, there is little agreement among historical records. According to Basil's (2012) review, Kingston installed the first FM in 1801, followed by the second market in Guelph, founded in 1827, and the third in Cambridge, founded in 1830 (Basil, 2012). In listing these early Canadian markets, it is unclear why Basil failed to acknowledge the Halifax Seaport Farmers' Market, the St. Lawrence Market in Toronto, or the ByWard Market in Ottawa, as these markets are said to have emerged in 1750, 1803, and 1826 respectively (A Little Piece…,2011; About, 2017; About Us, 2013). This may be due to Basil's definition of a FM, a definition that is missing from his review, apart from noting that "the general conception of [Canadian] farmers' markets was derived from public European markets" (Basil, 2012, p. 390). Regardless, the 19th century was a time of great proliferation of FMs all across Canada.

By the early 1800s, FMs were the primary means of providing food for the growing urban populations who were no longer involved in food production themselves (Robinson and Hartenfeld, 2007). It was less than a century later that the fate of FMs would take a drastic turn. In his analysis, Basil (2012) conceived a periodization of events that places FMs into three eras of development. These eras follow the establishment and expansion of FMs in the 1800s, their decline in the mid-20th century, and their revival and continuing renaissance since the 1970s.

From Boom to Bust: The Industrial Age and the Decline of Farmers' Markets

The first era of FMs in Canada, according to Basil (2012), saw them flourish and peak in popularity in conjunction with the period of greatest immigration, between 1900 and 1915. During this time, markets outgrew their original form and began to be privatized and permanently housed in large buildings. Over time, these independently owned commercial spaces began to offer much more than just agricultural goods, and the face of the FM began to shift. The end of this golden age of FMs in Canada was marked by a downturn in immigration and the beginning of the First World War. While these events kicked off the era of decline in FMs in North America, several other political, social and economic factors contributed as well. With the onset of the industrial age, advances in transportation infrastructure, refrigerated shipping and storage, and agricultural and food processing technologies set off a series of societal shifts that would profoundly impact the viability of FMs for decades to come (Basil, 2012; Hamilton, 2002; Shakow, 1981; Pyle, 1971). Efficiencies in transportation and refrigeration meant that urban centres were no longer limited to the availability and abundance of goods produced in the surrounding countryside. Meat and produce could now be shipped across the continent and seasonality of foods soon became a limitation of the past. Canning, freezing and other food processing advancements contributed to the rapid ascendance of grocery stores and supermarkets, which capitalized on these new shelf-stable products and the rising societal preoccupation with convenience. The wave of women entering the workforce during this period also lent itself to the demand for prepared foods and heat-and-serve meals (Basil, 2012; Hamilton, 2002). As well, the role of farmers shifted during this era, and many growers entered the world of cash cropping, primarily producing grain for the war effort. With innovations in farm equipment and chemical fertilizer and pesticide manufacturing, economies of scale ushered in the age of industrial agriculture. With the onset of the Second World War, vegetable, milk and egg production was relegated to hobby farmers and victory gardeners (i.e. those growing food to offset the food being shipped overseas) (Miller, 2003). While household gardens are said to have "produced over 40 percent of fresh produce in the USA" (Basil, 2012, p. 394) during World War II, FMs no longer contributed significantly to commercial food trade. Some historians note a few brief and isolated instances of FMs being resurrected during the Depression, when a few of the more productive gardeners attempted to alleviate their economic burdens with the sale of their surplus produce (Robinson and Hartenfeld, 2007; Stephenson, 2008). However, the overall trend during the first two-thirds of the 20th century saw FMs all but disappear.

In the 1940s and '50s, FMs were beginning to represent a relic of the past and the antithesis of progress (Basil, 2012). Indeed, the belief that FMs were now redundant and archaic, coupled with their ties to increasingly unpopular ethnic traditions in some cases, led to campaigns to discredit the sanitation and safety of these historic markets (Basil, 2012). Prohibitively stringent health and safety regulations often forced the closure of open-air markets that had been the primary site of food procurement for decades (Shakow, 1981). One final development that lent itself to the dissolution of the majority of FMs in North America was the escalating government intervention in agriculture. The rise of government assistance programs, food inspection legislation, and marketing boards, all designed to inject fairness into farming, gradually degraded the independence and dominion of farmers over their own livelihoods, and in turn, limited their ability to participate in FMs (Basil, 2012). With such far-reaching changes occurring in all areas of the food system, FM prevalence reached an all time low between the end of World War II and the 1960s. By one US estimation, "fewer than two percent of the six million farmers nationwide" (Hamilton, 2002, p. 75), were participating in FMs, and only 291 farmer-to-consumer markets were operating by the end of the war. By the 1960s, this number was estimated to be closer to 100 markets in the US and sixty in Canada (Cummings, Kora and Murray, 1999; Gillespie et al., 2007).

At the end of this period of disappearing FMs, supermarkets had become fully entrenched in the North American way of life. The appeal of convenience shopping had dominated consumer culture to such a degree that supercenters and so-called "hypermarkets" (Basil, 2012, p. 389) were becoming the new norm. These supermarket-department store hybrids had their origins in the 1920s with the opening of the first Fred Meyer store – a one-stop shopping trailblazer that laid the groundwork for cavernous all-in-one shopping centres like Wal-Mart, Tesco, Target and Costco (Fred Meyer, n.d.). Today, these ubiquitous multinational enterprises claim the vast majority of food expenditures, illustrating an extraordinary departure from the classic FM approach to food trade (Banjo, 2017; Holloway, 2016). In the face of this supermarket tidal wave, FMs have nonetheless persisted, and since the 1960s, they have undergone a rapid renaissance that signifies the third era of FMs (Basil, 2012).

Farmers' Market Renaissance

A number of significant events and publications took place in the 1960s and early 1970s, initiating a turning point in the way people thought about food. According to many ecological scholars, the publication and subsequent acclaim of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) marks the onset of our modern environmental consciousness (Colborn, Dumanoski and Myers, 1996; Gottlieb, 2005; Lytle, 2007; Nash, 1989). Concurrent with this new awareness was a mounting distrust of the staggering corporate dominance of the food system. This unfolding interest in nutritional health and food ethics was further bolstered with the publication of Adelle Davis's *Let's Get Well* (1965), and the 1971 release of Frances Moore Lappé's *Diet for a Small Planet.* These books exposed the routine use of hazardous chemicals in agriculture, the effects of eating highly processed foods, and the socio-political repercussions of the industrial food system. As a result, many consumers developed an urgent desire to reconnect with the source of their food and regain some control over their food choices. While supermarkets manufactured the illusion of choice with their overflowing displays, the choices they offered were limited to varieties that could be produced on an industrial scale, that could withstand the rigors of long-distance transport, and that adhered to genetic and cosmetic uniformity (Frison, 2016). And certainly, economic factors bolstered this trend. Food prices had been adjusted to favour highly processed foods, prompting one market researcher to predict that, "all but a few fresh vegetables that are not suitable to modern methods of processing may virtually disappear from American tables" (Jumper, 1974, p. 396). However, for some discerning shoppers, the shiny rows of identical apples and oranges began to represent all that is wrong with the food system. Consumer interest in what would eventually become known as organic food took hold, and in the early days of this paradigm shift, during the 1960s and early 1970s, FMs often provided the only access to foods produced in this way (Hamilton, 2002; Robinson and Hartenfeld, 2007). Soon FMs had a renewed purpose and played a vital role in providing an outlet for both producers and consumers hoping to disengage from the global industrial corporate food complex. By the mid-1970s, interest in reviving this antiquated form of food trade had reached such a high point that the US government took notice and instituted Public Law 49-463, known as the Farmer-to-Consumer Direct Marketing Act, in 1976 (Shakow, 1981). This bill was designed to lend policy support to the establishment and expansion of FMs across the country, as well as to lend legitimacy to FMs within the US Department of Agriculture, thus “freeing county agents to work with farmers and local activists to organize markets” (Brown, 2001, p. 657). Similar government support frameworks were being implemented in Canada, as exemplified by the creation of a grant program in Alberta funding FM development initiatives and similar supports provided by the Ontario government in the late 1980s (Basil, 2012; Cummings, Kora and Murray, 1999). This official political sponsorship helped to repair the flagging reputation of FMs and began to undo their association with poor hygiene (Hamilton, 2002). Furthermore, the appearance of FM Associations, Societies and Co-operatives demonstrated the widespread interest in organizing, supporting and improving existing FMs across North America (Basil, 2012). With government backing and rising consumer interest in FMs, small-scale farmers and practitioners of alternative agriculture could begin to reclaim some of the profits previously monopolized by agri-food corporations. This modest shift in profit flows back into the hands of farmers is all the more meaningful in light of the economic trends typical of the 20th century. While the profits generated in the agricultural sector reaching the pockets of farmers dropped from 41% to 9% between 1910 and 1990, the shares realized by the agricultural input and corporate marketing sectors climbed 9% and 23% respectively, during the same period (Kirschenmann, 1999). These figures attest to the vital need for vending opportunities that put farmers back in a position to achieve viable livelihoods. With the recent revival of FMs, these opportunities are being forged, and the proliferation of FMs in the US alone illustrates the extraordinary marketing potential for small-scale agriculture. Statistical data reveals a remarkable jump in US FMs from 1,755 markets in 1994 to 4,385 in 2006 (Hamilton, 2002; Stephenson, Lev and Brewer, 2008). And today, the US Department of Agriculture website houses a National Farmers Market Directory that lists over 8,600 markets to date (USDA, 2017). While similar statistics for Canada are not currently available, it is likely that FM growth has followed a similar curve (Feagan, Morris and Krug, 2004).

Farmers' Markets Defined

Alongside this latest era of FM renaissance, there has been a determined effort to define the parameters of today's markets. This has allowed historians and academics to better understand the origins and evolution of FMs through the ages, as well as helping to create a FM inventory (Brown, 2001; Pyle, 1971). Attempts to define the modern FM go beyond mere description of their form and instead strive to delineate the operational mandates and philosophies driving these markets (Stephenson, 2008). Notably, the new generation of FM is not simply a reproduction of the historical markets of the 19th and early 20th centuries. One difference is the tendency for large urban centres and highly populated suburban and rural areas to host a collection of small FMs, rather than one large market serving the entire region. This is both a function of the population densities we witness today as well as the tendency for FMs to be cultural reflections of neighbourhoods and small communities within the larger society (Basil, 2012). While the cultural aspect of the FM experience harkens back to their ancient Greek and Roman predecessors, in their contemporary form these markets seek to express and promote the micro-cultures of the neighbourhoods and communities that they serve. To some degree, one can ascertain a community's collective identity by attending their weekly FM. One can take note of the varieties of produce, the political flavour of customer conversations, the presence and style of street performers, the aromas of prepared foods, and the dispositions of the vendors. The unique atmosphere of each market and their contribution to cultural and economic development provide advocates the grounds for requesting municipal, provincial and federal support and protective policies that preserve the operational rights of FMs (Stephenson, 2008; Advocacy, 2013; Farmers Market Impact Toolkit, n.d.).

Another distinction of modern FMs is their positioning within a larger food movement characterized by emerging interest in food ethics, local economies, and agritourism (Stephenson, 2008). Within this context, FMs represent "keystones" (Gillespie et al., 2007, p. 65) in the sustainable restoration of viable local food systems. While FMs arose as the sole means of food procurement beyond household food production, the new FMs are being recognized as responsible and indispensible alternatives to the corporate giants that now threaten food security at both community and global levels (Gillespie et al., 2007). Understandably, operating under such political and ethical pressures, these new markets face a barrage of challenges, both within their own structures and from outside economic forces.

A New Generation of Challenges

As resilient as FMs have proven to be, they continue to struggle to maintain a unique and legitimate place in today's complex food system. Despite offering an alternative for which there is growing demand, these critical marketing outlets for small-scale farmers are still at risk of being co-opted and out-competed by supermarkets. The growing popularity of local food in general and FMs in particular has not gone unnoticed by the marketing teams for the grocery megacorps. One can now walk into the produce aisle of many chain supermarkets and find produce displayed on hay bales, in bushel baskets and atop wooden barrels, all meant to convey the intimate connection between the merchandise and the farm source. Indeed, the words 'farm-fresh', 'home style' and 'natural' can be found on the packaging of an absurd number of highly processed and factory farmed products, illustrating just how little advertising must conform to reality. Furthermore, some grocery outlets are responding to the demand for local foods by attempting to stock and promote a larger quantity of these items, or at least spotlighting the presence of a smattering of local products.

One representation of this promotional strategy is illustrated by the efforts of Foodland Ontario, an agricultural partnership program established in 1977 by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA). This promotional campaign strives to support and endorse the consumption of foods grown in Ontario, as well as to conduct market research into local food consumption and brand awareness. After almost 40 years of effort, the Foodland Ontario logo has become widely recognizable across the province as it accompanies large, eye-catching displays of Ontario-grown products in many of the major chain grocery stores (About us, 2015).

In 2014, Foodland Ontario acknowledged the marketing potential of partnering with FMs across the province. The brand can now be used free of charge by market managers and individual vendors, and Foodland Ontario offers an array of point of sale merchandising materials including stickers, banners, flags, calendars, recipe cards, activity books for kids and so on (Partners, 2015). While the effort to raise local food awareness is admirable, the Foodland Ontario brand has come under criticism for its broad definition of local – understandable, considering Ontario covers an area larger than 1 million square kilometres (Babington, 2013; CTV News, 2013). As well, some vendors and market managers are reluctant to fly the Foodland Ontario flag as they believe it waters down the diverse identities of individual FMs, a point of pride and distinction that characterizes this new generation of markets (Smithers, Lamarche, and Joseph, 2008). Indeed, the unique personalities of regional FMs represent one of the characteristics that supermarkets struggle to recreate in their relatively standardized and homogenized operations.

Social Capital and the Need for Authenticity

Another distinction that defines the character of modern FMs, and one that has yet to be co-opted by supermarket promotional teams, is the cultivation of social capital that is vital to all FMs, and is one of the key motivating factors that attracts and retains customers (Bourdieu, 1986). Much of the research investigating customer motivations for shopping at FMs indicates that people frequent markets as much for the socializing as for the high quality fresh food (Feagan, Morris and Krug, 2004; Robinson and Hartenfeld, 2007; Smithers, Lamarche and Joseph, 2008; Stephenson, 2008). This is likely an incentive born of consumers' desire to reconnect with the source of their food. Having the opportunity to speak directly with the producer of one's meat, diary products, eggs and produce has become vitally important to many consumers who have lost faith in the corporate and government entities currently responsible for ensuring food safety, upholding the ethical treatment of livestock, and safeguarding the agri-ecosystems impacted by our food systems. Fear and distrust have resulted from a growing awareness of the regulatory shortcuts and industry corruption that prevail in the North American food system (Robin, 2010; Singer and Mason, 2007). In light of these concerns, consumers are frequenting FMs in order to regain some agency over the quality of the food they eat and the broader impact of that food on the social, ecological and economic spheres. In this sense, FMs of today have begun to serve a variety of purposes beyond the mere acquisition of food commodities.

In endeavouring to preserve these critical social and political objectives, the efforts to outline the parameters of a true FM have proven challenging (Brown, 2001). This is partly due to the fact that, despite the long history of FMs, an official definition has never been instituted. This is all the more remarkable when one considers that market administrators, advocates and researchers have struggled with this issue since at least the 1940s. In those days of dwindling FMs, the founder and director of the San Francisco Victory Garden Council called attention to the impropriety of using the term ‘farmers’ market’ to describe commercial ventures that filled the pockets of middlemen and wholesalers while appearing to benefit farmers. Referring to the Los Angeles Market he stated, “It is not a farmers’ market. The public, though it was unaware of it, was buying from those who didn’t know a furrow from a farrow” (Robinson and Hartenfeld, 2007, p. 49). Today debates over the term ‘farmers’ market’ often focus on the ethics of allowing resellers to set up stalls and sell merchandise sourced from food terminals. This issue is complex and touches on matters of transparency, regional seasonality and market viability (Smithers, Lamarche and Joseph, 2008). Indeed, in order for some Central and Northern Ontario markets to provide for an expectant customer base in the early spring and late fall, “local importation” (Smithers, Lamarche and Joseph, 2008, p. 346) practices (which fall under the umbrella of reselling in the literature) are implemented whereby the definition of ‘local’ is expanded beyond the immediate region. While local farmers may be discouraged by having to compete with these resellers, without them, the limitations on season length could lead to market failure. And while making space for these products may be necessary to provide a sufficiently lengthy market season with adequate vendor numbers and product variety, some markets have faced criticism for failing to implement transparency on this issue. For customers coming to FMs specifically to chat with and support their local growers, it is vital that they can distinguish the resellers from the farmers (Smithers, Lamarche and Joseph, 2008). In a study examining customer motivations at Ontario FMs, the authors suggest strategies for negotiating the presence of resellers by offering discounted table rates, preferred locations and promotional support to primary producers, while relegating resellers to a designated section of the market with clear signage (Smithers, Lamarche and Joseph, 2008). These strategies aim to ensure that local producers can remain competitive and that customers can discern where their money is being spent, while recognizing the need for strategic flexibility.

Another strategy for addressing the issue of vendor authenticity includes the MyPick verification program developed by Farmers' Markets Ontario (FMO), an association of FMs that provides organizational and promotional support to markets across the province. Vendors selling at FMO affiliated markets have the option to apply for MyPick status, which verifies that the foods they sell are sourced directly from their farm, and are not being purchased at a food terminal (MyPick, 2015). This program seeks to instill accountability and authenticity, and to give FMs legitimacy within the local food movement. As well, the growing desire to create an official certification process delineating FM parameters reflects an interest in ensuring that current and future markets conform to a standard of ‘localness’ and continue to serve the sustainability goals of both producers and consumers.

Summary

While agricultural food trade has taken many forms since the days of ancient markets, there are themes running through this historical narrative. FMs today maintain ties to these predecessors in their cultural significance and their linkages to socio-political activity. In the race to modernize the food system, FMs have held their ground and continue to provide an alternative that many consumers have come to rely on in an age of uncertainty and conflict surrounding the global food system. And while the campaign to formally define and authenticate FMs has only recently begun to take shape, this movement indicates a desire to legitimize FMs and protect their indispensible niche within broader food economies. As questions of food system sustainability evolve, and the value of small-scale local food production and distribution gains validity, the crucial role of FMs demands deeper consideration.

Chapter 3: Global vs. Local Food Systems and Their Sustainability Potential

Introduction

Over the last 70 years, technological innovations have created a temporal and spatial contraction of the planet (O'Hara and Stagl, 2001). Due to advancements in transportation, communication, resource extraction and corporate integration, prior limits to production, processing and distribution of goods and services have shifted substantially. People living in the developed world in particular have grown accustomed to the ready availability of products whose raw materials and manufacturing derive from afar, often from multiple countries of origin. This phenomenon is manifested on a daily basis through the workings of our current food system. Whether starting the day in Canada with a glass of orange juice, cultivating wheat fields in Uttar Pradesh, or delivering pizza in Tokyo, people across the planet participate in a food system whose complexity and scope are incomprehensible. While the globalization of the food system has resulted in some extraordinary gains in production, creating market opportunities for developing countries, and freeing communities from the vagaries of subsistence farming, it has at the same time, resulted in some disquieting trends. As these trends receive more scholarly attention, many academics have cast doubt on the sustainability of the current global food system (GFS) (Akram-Lodhi, 2013; Hinrichs and Lyson, 2007; Patel, 2007; Roberts, 2008). Further, significant research in recent years suggests that a re-localization of our food system can and should be undertaken in order to enhance its resilience and ethical integrity (Allen, 2010; Connelly, Markey and Roseland, 2011; Hinrichs and Lyson, 2007; Wilkins, 2005).

In the following chapter, I will outline some of the characteristics of the GFS, first describing its origins and then discussing its implications for sustainability. In exploring food system sustainability, I will use the three-pillar model outlined in the "global agenda for change" by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987, p. 6), taking into consideration economic, environmental and social implications of the food system. The recently popularized fourth pillar, 'cultural', will be included under social sustainability (Duxbury, and Gillette, 2007). I will then contrast the GFS with the features of local or regionalized systems, exploring the potential for such food systems to promote sustainability in terms of ecological resilience, social wellbeing, and economic viability. Considerable academic literature has examined the complexities intertwining notions of 'local' and 'global' in our social and economic processes, noting the folly of dichotomizing food systems in this way (Hinrichs, 2003; Dupuis and Goodman, 2005). Nevertheless, I believe the 'global vs. local' debate remains a useful way to frame the problems that permeate our food systems today, and the potentially more sustainable solutions that are emerging. When considering the need for a more sustainable way to produce, distribute and consume food, local food systems (LFS) appear to offer a compelling alternative to the more detrimental consequences of the conventional, industrial model. In illustrating the workings of LFSs, I focus on farmers' markets (FM) as a fundamental outlet for local food provisioning within food system development (Gillespie et al., 2007). As such, FMs allow us to observe a key feature of LFSs in action and demonstrate community-level opportunities for reaching sustainability objectives.

Origins of the Global Food System

Food has been transported and traded since ancient times, but the concept of globalization, particularly with regard to agriculture and food, is said to have emerged approximately 500 years ago (Koç and Dahlberg, 1999; Lang, 1999). While the development of the GFS has gained significant momentum since the 1940s, it has its roots in early European exploration and conquest (Lang, 1999; Norberg-Hodge, Merrifield and Gorelick, 2002). Since colonial rulers developed an appetite for the flavours of faraway lands, foodstuffs have been journeying across great distances to become part of 'traditional' diets as they have been folded into culinary history. While potatoes play a significant role in Irish history, they are not native to Ireland, but were introduced by Spanish conquistadors from the Andes. Similarly, tomatoes, also originating in South America, are now considered a staple of traditional Italian cuisine (Friedmann, 1999; Kipple, 2007). During the Columbian Exchange, food cultures became infinitely complex, versatile and mutable (Kipple, 2007). However, this culinary versatility was realized at the price of human welfare, as colonies were plundered and indigenous peoples enslaved in order to provide a steady flow of exotic foods and spices, among other goods, to imperial states. Colonialism led to settlement of the New World, and European foods, farming practices and livestock genetics accompanied the settlers, further altering the foodscapes of the globe (Norberg-Hodge, Merrifield and Gorelick, 2002). Thus foods and their source materials crisscrossed the planet, forever mutating local diets and native edible plants and animals.

With the onset of the Industrial Revolution and the resulting urban migration of great portions of the population, the gulf between the people and processes involved in production and the systems of consumption would widen significantly (Norberg-Hodge, Merrifield and Gorelick, 2002). Home gardens gradually disappeared and a greater dependence of urban dwellers on the agricultural peripheries was established. As industrialization came to be synonymous with development, production of food and fibre commodities signified underdevelopment. European countries specialized in industrial manufacturing, while the colonies supplied the agricultural raw materials and foodstuffs (McMichael, 2000).

The gradual shift toward a globalized food system took a dramatic turn around the time of the Second World War, paralleling the decline of FMs described in Chapter 2. During and following the 1940s, several technological innovations substantially altered the way food was produced, processed and distributed, leading to a further detachment from reliance on local agriculture. Advances in refrigerated transport meant that food products could be quickly and easily moved vast distances without spoiling. The development of increasingly complex processing technologies further promoted shelf-stability and transportability. At the same time, agricultural production practices were becoming more and more standardized and mechanized. The Fordist strategy of assembly line mass production was infiltrating virtually all aspects of industrial life, including food and agriculture (Friedmann, 1998). The technologies developed during the time of the Green Revolution incorporated highly productive varieties of wheat and rice, prescribed fertilization and irrigation techniques, and an expansion of mechanized labour. The productive capacity of these technological systems was undeniable and thus they were distributed across several developing nations and hailed as having solved the world's hunger problem (Akram-Lodhi, 2013). At the same time, the use of agro-chemicals proliferated and, for farmers wishing to remain competitive, inorganic fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides became critical to their operations (McMichael, 2007).

Today we continue to see systematized methods of farming in most industrialized regions. With even more advanced transportation, food processing technologies, and hyper-efficient communications and logistical frameworks for coordinating food marketing and distribution, temporal and spatial limitations on the food industry have been greatly reduced (O'Hara and Stagl, 2001). Indeed, modern technologies have even removed biological barriers as plant and animal genetics have come under human control. These relatively new technologies and practices have become the norm in many parts of the world and are poised for even wider dissemination (Patel, 2013).

Presently, there are very few people who are not touched by the global reach of the food industry, either in the foods that they eat, or the food products that they have a hand in producing. In the following paragraphs, I will outline some of the dominant characteristics of this GFS from a sustainability perspective in order to more clearly contrast it with how we might envision a sustainable LFS.

Economic Sustainability and the Global Food System

With the onset of neoliberalism, the globalized economy became increasingly driven by corporate capitalism, which is in turn driven by self-interest, competition, efficiency and profit maximization (Bishop, 2000). When these drivers are applied to the food system, we see economies of scale favouring industrial mega-farms that operate not unlike assembly-line factories (Lyson and Green, 1999). These farms must continually expand in order to compete on the international market, and they must grow their bottom line in order to pay for the expanding infrastructure. This is particularly difficult with food prices being influenced by global market fluctuations, government subsidies driving global prices down, and retail and marketing costs eating into producers' earnings (Hamilton, 2002; Hendrickson and Heffernan, 2002; Norberg-Hodge, Merrifield and Gorelick, 2002). As these various players along the supply chain acquire increasing shares of food receipts, farmers claim a diminishing slice of the economic pie unless they are able to add value to the raw products. The agricultural treadmill is difficult to dismount once a farmer has bought into it. While some farms prosper within this system, many do not, as is evidenced by the concurrent trends in developed countries of decreasing numbers of small farms and increasing acreage of medium-scale farms, over the last 60-70 years (IFPRI, 2005). The shift of farmers off the land and into urban centres in search of employment has resulted in the expansion of slums in many parts of the world, and growing poverty among former food producers (McMichael, 2000; Norberg-Hodge, Merrifield and Gorelick, 2002). As well, agricultural employment opportunities are declining as mechanization and automated technologies continue to render human skills redundant. Advancements like precision agriculture software and the use of GPS-equipped farm machinery have been added to older farming innovations like automated milking, feeding and watering systems. This trend reframes farms as manufacturing plants, replaces farmers with technicians, and reduces the need for intimate familiarity with all aspects of land and livestock. Mobile phone software tells farm operators when, where and how much to water and fertilize and when to harvest crops. They tell egg farmers when to adjust the light and temperature of the barns, and when equipment is malfunctioning or in need of repair (Faruqi, 2015). And while these innovations are being touted as compatible with sustainable agriculture as they can reduce unnecessary watering, fertilizing and pesticide application, they remove the need for human labour from the process of food production and they precipitate the loss of indigenous local farming knowledge (Zhang and Pierce, 2013). With fewer farming jobs and the growth of automated, absentee-owned farms, rural communities are suffering from high levels of unemployment and depleted local economies (Laidlaw, 2006). With its singular focus on maximizing efficiency and boosting the bottom line, corporate industrial agribusiness realizes magnificent profits only by externalizing the ecological and social costs of their business model (Appleby et al., 2002; O'Hara and Stagl, 2001). These so-called 'externalities' are often manifested in the disturbance of agricultural and adjacent ecosystems.

Environmental Sustainability and the Global Food System

Just as the economic drivers of the GFS favour industrial agriculture and economies of scale, so too do they promote vast monocultures. Despite the fact that monocropping has proven to create vulnerable ecosystems, extensive acreages of single crops continue to spread across the globe. Alarming reports of significant biodiversity loss, topsoil erosion and pollinator mortality are linked to the practice of industrial monocultures, as are eutrophication of surface waters from nutrient pollution, increased vulnerability to pests and disease, and the associated reliance on agrochemicals (Altieri, 2009c; 2009c; Nicholls and Altieri, 2013). Furthermore, industrial livestock operations are linked to rising antibiotic-resistance, zoonotic diseases like Mad Cow and avian flu, and unspeakable cruelty as animals are packed into increasingly tiny spaces, bred to develop their most profitable organs in dangerous disproportion to the rest of their bodies, and treated as insentient commodities (Berry, 1977).

In order to perpetuate this system, industrial agriculture is heavily dependent on fossil fuels, from the energy and materials needed to manufacture inputs, to the extensive transport, processing and storage networks (Roberts, 2008). Further contributing to climate change, industrial agriculture is adept at converting carbon-sequestering ecosystems into greenhouse gas-emitting plantations. For example, the palm oil industry has taken recent criticism for its expansion into rainforests and peat bogs. This process not only destroys invaluable biomes, but the land conversion also releases stored carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere. Palm oil is ubiquitous in the processed food industry, whose products are linked with obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease (Furumo and Aide, 2017; Moodie et al., 2013; Steele et al., 2017). Palm oil is also manufactured into biofuel in an attempt to offset fossil fuel dependence. However, the production of food-crop biofuels is said to create a significant carbon debt, as the land clearance necessary for production emits much more CO_2 than these fuels displace (Danielsen et al., 2009; Fargione et al., 2008; Fitzherbert et al., 2008). And even more concerning than plant-based agriculture, livestock industries are said to be the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions of all food operations. Statistics are inconsistent: the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) estimate from 2006 assessed the contribution of livestock production to global anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions at 18% (Steinfeld et al., 2006); whereas, according to a Worldwatch Institute report published three years later, the FAO grossly underestimated the impact of the livestock industry on atmospheric pollution, and is more accurately calculated at 51% of global GHG emissions (Goodland and Anhang, 2009). Although the precise extent of the associated emissions from livestock production may be disputed, meat and animal product consumption and their contribution to climate change, in the range of 18-51%, is certainly cause for concern (Lin et al., 2011; Neff, Chan and Smith, 2009).

Some environmental scientists also call attention to the way industrial agricultural systems treat soil as an inert medium whose value can be endlessly extracted with only minimal effort to replenish its macronutrients (Lal, 2015; Wall and Six, 2015). Farmers and scientists alike have long known that soil is an immeasurably complex world of interconnected processes and organisms bound in a continuous cycle of decay and regeneration (Berry, 1977; Howard, 1947; Kirschenmann, 1997). By reducing this microscopic ecosystem to a uniform and mechanistic growing medium, industrial agricultural practices not only damage these intricate cycles, but also negate the vast potential of agricultural soils to sequester and accumulate carbon. Through careful land and soil management, including no-till farming, woodland regeneration, crop rotation, rotational grazing and other such strategies, some research suggests that agricultural lands have the potential to act as significant carbon sinks, whose contribution to climate change mitigation has been largely overlooked (Lal, 2004; Ohlson, 2014).

Another of the ecological externalities resulting from industrial agricultural practices is the escalation of food waste. By some estimates, one third of all food produced worldwide ends up being thrown away, often despite being perfectly safe and edible (Bond et al., 2013). This can happen at one of several points along the food supply chain: at harvest time when produce is rejected for not conforming to size and shape standards; at the retail level, when misleading ‘sell-by’ dates or packaging errors can result in dumpsters full of unspoiled foods; and at the household level where food goes to waste due to poor meal-planning, overstocking pantries, rejecting slightly wilted foods, and simply disposing of food because it is cheap and abundant (Parfitt, Barthel, and Mcnaughton, 2010). In terms of waste occurring at the household level, studies in the UK have estimated that one quarter of all food purchased is eventually discarded (Lee, Willis and Hollins, 2010). Reasons for household food waste in the developed world are intimately tied to the workings of the GFS: the growing producer-consumer divide (whereby consumers become blind to the efforts involved in food production), the desire for cosmetic perfection and uniformity of food, and the belief that food is and will continue to be cheap, available, and disposable (Parfitt, Barthel, and Mcnaughton, 2010).

These trends in food waste have both environmental and social implications: consider the wasted energy and resources used to grow, process, package, ship and sell food that ends up in landfills, and the injustice of discarding food in the face of widespread hunger and malnutrition. According to a 2009 study, food waste in the US alone “accounts for more than one quarter of the freshwater consumption and ~300 million barrels of oil per year” (Hall et al., 2009, p. 1). Add to this the GHG emissions caused by the decomposition of food sent to landfills, and the environmental fallout from food waste continues to escalate (Hall et al., 2009). And while food is converted to garbage all along the supply chain, hunger and malnutrition remain global threats. Agribusiness executives and agronomists insist that production must be intensified by any means possible, particularly biotechnological means, in order to address current and future caloric needs. Meanwhile, countries with some of the highest rates of hunger are net exporters of food commodities (Akram-Lodhi, 2013; Lappé and Lappé, 2004). In India, stockpiles of wheat have been left to rot while political leaders respond to the economic pressures of global trade, rather than responding to the nutritional and subsistence needs of local populations (Waldman, 2002). These food system dynamics illustrate how environmental externalities are intimately connected to untenable social conditions.

Social Sustainability and the Global Food System

The social impact of the GFS can be observed in both developing and developed nations. With increasing corporate control of food from farm to plate, both producers and consumers are experiencing a deterioration of what Lappé and Lappé (2004) call “living democracy” (p. 130), referring to the day-to-day agency we have in shaping our lives. This includes the control farmers have over their livelihoods, and the choices consumers have in provisioning food. Decisions about the foods that are produced, how they’re produced, and who has access to the land and infrastructure necessary to produce them is being increasingly concentrated into the boardrooms of a handful of corporate conglomerates (Halweil, 2002; Hauter, 2012; Lapping, 2004). Access to land has been a particularly contentious issue in Brazil where historically embedded landholdings have forcibly dispossessed millions of rural residents, while vast acres of arable lands sit idle (McMichael, 2000). While the efforts of the Landless Rural Workers Movement have made headway in influencing land reform, this has not come without considerable bloodshed (Lappé and Lappé, 2004; Patel, 2007). And similar struggles are occurring all over the world. The concentration of farmland into the hands of agribusiness has been linked to dispossession of peasant farmers across the Global South through large-scale land acquisition deals, known as "land-grabbing" (White et al., 2012, p. 619). One consequence of this trend is that farmers in these regions become a cheap source of labour, with little to no control over the land or their livelihoods (Holt-Giménez and Altieri, 2013). In India, a spike in farmer suicides has been linked to the loss of control over land, and the spiraling pressures of debt resulting from attempts to enter into the competitive race of industrial agriculture (Bastian, 2012). The tendency for the globalized corporate food system to discount and impoverish the livelihoods of farmers the world over, is being denounced by global protest groups who are helping to place these issues on policy agendas (Alkon and Mares, 2012; Altieri and Toledo, 2011; McMichael, 2014).

Just as producers are losing sovereignty over their livelihoods, consumers are also experiencing a loss of control over the food they purchase. Food literacy and culinary knowledge has eroded in many developed nations, as the food system becomes increasingly globalized (Colatruglio and Slater, 2014). With the widening gap between producers and consumers, there is a concurrent degradation of traceability and trust. Increasingly frequent food scares, product recalls, and the rapid spread of genetically modified food crops despite widespread uncertainty about their long-term impacts, have all created anxiety around food safety (Brom, 2000). The GFS requires that we place our trust in expert systems like governmental and agricultural agencies that purport to prioritize the interests of the public. However, this trust is steadily eroding and consumers are looking for alternatives in order to reclaim control over their food (Norberg-Hodge, Merrifield, and Gorelick, 2002; O'Hara and Stagl, 2001; Wallgren, 2006). In an effort to counteract the growing distrust, corporate food companies pay marketing agencies billions of dollars annually to research human behaviour and develop branding strategies that will best communicate trustworthiness and instill confidence (Hendrickson and Heffernan, 2002). However, there remains a gap between the advertisers' message and the real effects of the products being promoted. This can most clearly be seen in the trends in food advertising targeted at children (Coakley, 2003). While children have become a multi-billion dollar target market in the eyes of global food corporations, the products advertised tend to be high in sugar, salt and fat (Coakley, 2003; Story and French, 2004). Studies conducted in a variety of countries suggest a strong correlation between these food-marketing trends and the rising levels of childhood obesity across the globe (Boyland and Halford, 2013; Cairns et al., 2013; Kelly et al., 2010; Story and French, 2004). As such, while food companies can market their products as fun, safe and/or trustworthy, the health effects of eating these foods tell a different story.

Another social consequence of the GFS involves the global expansion and influence of food industry firms. The spread of supermarket and fast-food chains, particularly in Asia, demonstrates the Westernization of food cultures (Pingali, 2007). The Western diet is characterized by high proportions of animal products, increased consumption of convenience and processed foods, and strong preferences for fast food (Pingali, 2007). The spread of this diet into all corners of the globe are plainly manifested by the enormous growth and reach of the meat industry. Between 1950 and the early 2000s, some estimates imply "a near-doubling of meat consumption in the average diet of every single person on earth amid a soaring human population" (Weis, 2007, p. 17). And this trend is likely to continue as increased meat consumption is associated with the increasing incomes and urbanization occurring in the developing world (Steinfield et al., 2006). Just as numerous studies are revealing the need for the world's population to reduce their consumption of meat, both for the sake of their health and for the sake of climate stabilization, countries in the developing world are increasingly consuming this staple of industrialized diets (de Boer, Schösler and Boersema, 2013; Weis, 2013).

Beyond harming the planet and human health, the propagation of Westernized diets across the globe threatens food cultures and traditions. In 1994, an annual report for the Campbell's Soup Company reveled in the market potential of Asia, stating that, "most of the soup in Asia is still homemade, so our growth potential in this region brims with promise" (cited in Norberg-Hodge, Merrifield, and Gorelick, 2002, p. 29). The same annual report went on to celebrate the potential for Campbell's to expand into Mexico following the passage of NAFTA. This introduction of new food products initially marks a diversification of cuisines, whereby eaters see their options expand and their traditional diets supplemented. However, some researchers have noted the eventual tendency for the new products and diets to replace local food cultures, and even to engender a disdain for the traditional (Norberg-Hodge, 2003; Pingali, 2007). This trend indicates a growing cultural homogeneity, but it also heralds a health care crisis as the nutritional transition underway in the developing world toward Western ways of eating is associated with the alarming rise in global obesity and diabetes (Baker and Friel, 2014; Malik, Willett and Hu, 2013; Nanditha et al., 2016). As such, the ethical implications of the globalization of diet and culture are being critiqued and found wanting.

In another illustration of unethical cultural interference in the name of market expansion, Nestlé and other makers of infant formula launched an aggressive campaign in developing countries in the 1980s, proclaiming the superiority of formula over breast milk. The unforeseen and tragic consequences saw some of the women who succumbed to this marketing ploy not only mixing the formula with contaminated local water, but also over-diluting the pricey formula, thus depriving their children of safe and sufficient nutrition (Roberts, 2008). While Nestlé has since been heavily criticized in the media and as a result, the company has attempted to sanitize their public image, distaste for that company in particular, and general distrust in corporations remains widespread (Adams, Highhouse and Zickar, 2010; Jenkins, 2015; Koç, 2015; Smith, 2015). One author, writing about the challenges facing food policy-makers, calls the growing attitude of distrust "a global legitimacy crisis" in which citizens must participate in "a global economy shaped by corporate greed" (Koç, 2015, p. 20).

The increasing awareness and criticism of the consequences of globalization and the GFS in particular, have launched a wave of speculation about and advocacy for re-localizing food. Certainly, corporate interests in maintaining global economic networks emphasize the need for maximized efficiency and production yields that can only come from a continuation and expansion of industrial agriculture. However, if the abovementioned social and ecological impacts of the GFS are taken into account, the cost of globalized food production becomes significantly higher.

Local Food Systems Defined

Despite rampant globalization, LFSs prevail in the more remote corners of the globe, where indigenous populations are still relatively untouched by industrialization, and where land has escaped the expansive spread of modern agriculture (Norberg-Hodge, Merrifield and Gorelick, 2002; Winter, 2003). However, speculating about modern LFSs in otherwise industrialized countries and communities must necessarily be theoretical, as globalization has become deeply and decidedly entrenched. While we can draw from the examples of indigenous and historical food systems, we can only hypothesize as to the sustainability potential of LFSs. I will begin by describing some of the basic characteristics of a LFS as it contrasts with the GFS.

A LFS is much more nuanced than simply a geographically bounded area of food production and consumption. It has social, ecological and economic implications that arise from embeddedness in the unique culture and values of a particular region or community (Hinrichs, 2000). It is context-specific in the sense that ecological and social circumstances inform its performance and expression (O'Hara and Stagl, 2001). LFSs tend to be driven by the needs of both producers and consumers. Whereas the GFS responds to patterns of consumer demand, promoting convenience and quantity over quality, LFSs aim to acknowledge and even champion the vital role of producers. Indeed, in a LFS, the mutual dependence of producers and consumers is much more apparent, and supply and demand dynamics play out with more immediacy (Miller, 2008). O'Hara and Stagl (2001) touch on the importance of local feedback mechanisms, noting that the externalities created by the GFS become internalized when the social and ecological consequences of the food system are immediately experienced by communities. If food production practices in a particular region cause ground water contamination, airborne pesticide pollution, or food-borne illness, the local community will experience these as immediate signals. Accordingly, this feedback compels participants in LFSs to advocate sustainable alternatives to food production and consumption (O'Hara and Stagl, 2001). As well, Hendrickson and Heffernan (2002) describe how LFSs are inherently more flexible and amenable to alternative and niche markets than the mass-production-oriented GFS, providing opportunities for culturally diverse food products to flourish. Being less entrenched in complex commodity networks and economies of scale, local food producers can more nimbly respond to local food fads and specialty product demand from their community (Hendrickson and Heffernan, 2002).

Because of the diversified and context-specific nature of LFSs, generalized definitions are inadequate. Therefore, in order to analyze the sustainability potential of LFSs, it is helpful to examine one small but essential aspect of such food systems. In illustrating the contrast between local and GFSs and their relative influence on sustainability, FMs represent a tangible expression of LFSs. While FMs represent only one facet of local food production and consumption, they have been characterized as “a logical response” (Gillespie et al., 2007, p. 68) to the GFS, and as “keystones in rebuilding more localized food systems” (Gillespie et al., 2007, p. 66). As well, direct marketing endeavours (including, but not limited to, FMs) are regarded as “basic channel[s] for helping to localize and simplify cycles of food production” (Feagan, Morris and Krug, 2004, p. 238), and as a means of returning to the historical standard of “locally-produced and controlled food provisioning…” (Wittman, 2011, p. 8). Furthermore, Smithers et al. (2008) assert that the FM represents more than simply a site for economic exchange, “but also as a venue for negotiated meaning in the local food landscape” (p. 338). Examination of

FMs as the embodiment of the local alternative to GFSs provides us with a concrete means of understanding the impact the GFS has had in the social, ecological and economic spheres since its world-wide establishment.

Environmental Sustainability and Local Food Systems

Much has been written about the '100-mile diet' and its ecological advantages (Blay-Palmer, 2008; Elton, 2010; Smith and MacKinnon, 2007). It stands to reason that foods travelling across an entire planet in order to reach the supermarket shelves would rack up a hefty carbon footprint. In a 2005 study by the Toronto, Ontario organization FoodShare, ingredients for one meal purchased at a grocery store were compared to those purchased for an identical meal at the FM. The former ingredients were estimated to have traveled an average of 5,364 km from production to retail, while the latter traveled an average of 101 km (Bentley and Barker, 2005). Despite the limitations of this analysis, it does serve as a striking illustration of the argument made by local food advocates. However, more comprehensive research reveals the flaw in focusing on food miles as an indicator of food's impact on climate change. By one estimation, transport of food to the average US household accounts for only 11% of the total life-cycle GHG emissions, whereas production contributes 83% (Weber and Matthews, 2008). Indeed, some argue that shifting the content of our diets toward plant-based foods would dramatically alleviate the ecological impact of our food system, much more than simply localizing our consumption

(Eshel and Martin, 2006). Furthermore, a study in Sweden, comparing local distribution via the Stockholm FM to global food transport, found no significant difference in transport energy intensity (the amount of energy used to transport 1 kg of food) between the two distribution systems (Wallgren, 2006). Excluding air-freight distribution, which skews the statistics significantly but is considered a much less common mode of food transport (Weber and Matthews, 2008), the relative efficiency of mass-transport of food for global markets compared to the energy-inefficiency of numerous vehicles transporting very small quantities of food to the FM, comes out in the wash (Wallgren, 2006). These studies seek to highlight the weakness of simplifying local food sustainability arguments into debates about food miles (Edwards-Jones et al., 2008). Furthermore, focusing on food miles overlooks the challenges that northern, remote, and resource-poor regions face in maintaining a local food system that meets their nutritional needs (Council of Canadian Academies, 2014). Instead, local food and environmental sustainability must be studied in a more holistic light, taking into consideration the ecological externalities outlined above, arising from production, processing, packaging and promotion (Van Passel, 2013).

Food transport debates aside, food production practices have a significant impact on environmental sustainability. LFSs and FMs in particular, encourage sustainable agricultural practices in a number of ways. Though most FM vendors are not required to use organic or ecologically sound farming practices, customer profiling studies in Canada and the USA show that the average FM customer is creating demand for such products, thus strengthening market security for farmers keen to use alternative sustainable practices (Brown, 2002; Greenbelt Farmers' Market Network, 2010; Hunt, 2007; Smithers, Lamarche and Joseph, 2008). Market customers reportedly place high value on being able to connect directly with the producers of their food, and relish the opportunity to ask about production or animal husbandry practices (Björklund et al., 2009; Feagan, Morris and Krug, 2004; Hamilton, 2002; Robinson and Hartenfeld, 2007). Customers express concerns regarding the use of chemical sprays and the wellbeing of livestock, thus providing vendors with clear incentive to adopt sustainable practices and increase their animal welfare. Many of these practices, including crop diversification and rotation, reduced mechanization and increased draft animal farming, free-range and pastured livestock, integrated pest management and other knowledge-intensive approaches to farm management are uniquely suited to small-scale farms (D'Souza and Ikerd, 1996; Magdoff, 2007). As well, FMs are often the only marketing outlet for small, independent and start-up food producers and entrepreneurs. As such, FMs act as incubators for these fragile operations, allowing them to test products, develop marketing strategies and establish enough capital to grow their business (Brown, 2002; Gillespie et al., 2007). Without these opportunities, small-scale and sustainably minded entrepreneurs would struggle to access retail channels beyond their farm gate. Finally, the proliferation of FMs is expanding access to and demand for local food, which in turn allows prime agricultural land to be kept in production, protected from urban sprawl and conversion to non-productive uses (Brown, 2002; Feagan et al., 2004; Francis et al., 2012).

Another contribution FMs can make to mitigating the environmental impact of food is in their approach to packaging. Take a tour through any FM, and the shortage of packaging is notable (Feagan, Morris and Krug, 2004). Freshly harvested vegetables and fruits are usually arranged in pyramids, open to the air and unadorned with plastic. Though plastic bags are available for separating and carrying produce home, shoppers are often encouraged to reuse bags or return packaging such as egg cartons or strawberry boxes to be re-used by the vendors (Greenbelt Farmers' Market Network, 2010). The produce is not required to withstand long-distance travel and the bruising jostle of over-handling, and the lack of packaging reflects this. Supermarkets also array produce in open-air displays, however, these products have been removed from the packaging in which they were shipped, only to be repackaged in plastic bags by consumers. As well, in recent years, more and more heavily packaged fruits and vegetables are infiltrating the produce aisles, such as individually wrapped potatoes, plastic clamshell-encased tomatoes, pre-peeled and plastic-wrapped oranges, and pre-halved and shrink-wrapped avocados. These packages provide not only protection during transport, but also a handy surface for branding and advertising, thus further incentivizing increased packaging from the food corporation's perspective (Norberg-Hodge, Merrifield and Gorelick, 2002).

A third contribution that local food and FMs make to environmental sustainability is their promotion of biodiversity. Local markets allow and encourage small-scale farmers to design their farms using a diversity of crops and livestock. Product diversification allows farmers to attract a broad customer base, lengthen their market season, and protect the economic viability of their enterprise, however, the benefits are not only economic (Gillespie et al., 2007). The niche marketing opportunities of LFSs allow for locally adapted varieties and breeds to be cultivated and promoted. The GFS, in its efforts to streamline production, has whittled down crop and livestock genetics to those most suitable for industrial-scale mass production and transport. Meanwhile, local food markets are opening doors to heritage breeds and heirloom varieties that are incompatible with global supply chains (Goland and Bauer, 2004). The promotion of such biodiversity is becoming increasingly important as its association with ecological resilience is crucial to climate change adaptation (Kirschenmann, 2010a; Koohafkan, Altieri and Holt Gimenez, 2012; Scialabba and Müller-Lindenlauf, 2010). Promoting heterogeneity in production systems and field design is also being shown to promote associated diversity of local wildlife through habitat preservation, as well as diversity of soil organisms (Björklund et al., 2009). While such examples of ecosystem services resulting from localized food production are promising, they can only be undertaken if the system provides economic stability to the producers and food entrepreneurs involved.

Economic Sustainability and Local Food Systems

Just as food globalization puts our ecological resilience at risk, it has also been steadily degrading the economic viability of small-scale, independent farms, particularly in North America. Since the 1960s and 70s, farmers have been urged to “get big or get out” and “adapt or die”, sentiments attributed to US Secretaries of Agriculture under Presidents Eisenhower and Nixon, respectively (Hauter, 2012, p. 23; Roberts, 2008, p. 120). As a counterpoint to this trend, FMs are on the rise, thus providing a much-needed marketing outlet for the remaining small-scale farms. As mentioned above, the escalating interest in local food and the upsurge of local markets is reinstating livelihood viability to farmers who could not otherwise compete on the global stage, as these markets present few barriers to small and newly established enterprises. Furthermore, thriving FMs are breathing new life into local economies. Whereas industrial agricultural operations are shown to erode local economies, puncture property values, and reduce employment opportunities (Laidlaw, 2004), local food markets can promote economic development (Farmers’ Markets Ontario, 2011). They have been shown to promote local spending and keep money circulating within communities as well as promoting tourism, since FMs often provide a unique and festive atmosphere that represents the local culture and draws visitors (Basil, 2012; Brown, 2002).

The connection between FMs and community economic development was documented in research conducted at the University of Guelph, and supported by FMO in 1998 (Cummings, Kora and Murray, 1999). In this study, the authors measured the economic impact of Ontario FMs by examining total annual vendor sales, purchases made in the surrounding business community on market days, and the number of jobs directly and indirectly associated with FM activities during the summer months. The total economic impact of Ontario FMs, taking into consideration the associated economic activity surrounding the farmers and their employees, [i.e. for every dollar spent in the market, two dollars are said to "ripple through the provincial economy" (Cummings, Kora and Murray, 1999, p. 57)], was said to be approximately $1.5 billion (Cummings, Kora and Murray, 1999).

Ten years later, FMO released an updated report that estimated the economic activity associated with Ontario FMs to be valued at $792 million, and the provincial economic impact (including expenditures across the entire agri-food industry) was estimated to be $2.47 billion (FMO, 2011). Furthermore, this study produced an estimate that FMs generated nearly 21,000 employment opportunities either through the sale of products at market, or indirectly through market preparations. For context, a 2013 study found that the entire agri-food industry supports 158,000 jobs (Wales, 2013).

The effect FMs have on local economies is also associated with the business that they attract to the surrounding commercial areas of a town or municipality. In 1998, Cummings et al., asked surrounding business owners how the FM affected their sales on market day. Generally, business owners noted greater customer traffic on market days. Customer surveys supported this observation, finding that most FM customers did additional shopping on market days, and almost half of those surveyed specifically made purchases at businesses in close proximity to the market (Cummings, Kora, and Murray, 1999). Research conducted in other provinces found similar trends, noting that FM customers generally combined their market excursions with other shopping activities (Connell, 2012; Experience Renewal…2009). These studies illustrate the capacity for FMs to stimulate economic development, and some markets have been shown to revitalize flagging commercial areas (Pike Place…, 2004).

Finally, a study conducted by the University of Minnesota found that small farms, like those supported by local markets, tend to purchase 90% of their inputs locally, as opposed to larger operations whose local expenditures only account for 20% of total input purchases (Chism and Levins, 1994). Certainly, there is ample evidence that building LFSs and developing thriving FMs has the capacity to bolster local economic sustainability. The implications for social sustainability are equally promising.

Social Sustainability and Local Food Systems

In 1946, two reports, comparing the impact of locally owned farms and businesses with large-scale, corporate enterprises on community welfare, showed similar findings: that communities characterized by small, local businesses and farms created the conditions for greater civic welfare and social capital (Goldschmidt, 1946; Lyson, 2004; Mills and Ulmer, 1946). In spite of this research, our economic and social development strategies have steadily eroded the viability of small local businesses and increasingly diminish civic welfare, particularly in the realm of food. Proponents of the GFS stress the need to increase production at all costs and in doing so, they reduce humans to mouths and stomachs, and food to commoditized calories (Atkinson, 2004). In contrast to this, local food advocates hope to acknowledge the sociocultural complexities of food by valuing the places in which food is produced, building community awareness around food production and distribution, and protecting the unique ways in which communities express themselves through food (Lyson, 2004; Wittman, 2011).

One of the common foundations for local food advocacy is the importance of addressing the ever-widening spatial and social gap between producers and consumers (Hendrickson and Heffernan, 2002). Arguably, the human and environmental externalities associated with the GFS have only been made possible by the veil of obscurity that shrouds much of today's food production. One need only look to the livestock industry to understand the extent to which consumers have become oblivious to the production process. While few meat-eaters wish to dwell on the source of their roast beef, they recognize that omnivorous diets involve the slaughter of animals. However, they may justify their meat eating by assuming that livestock are raised hygienically and slaughtered humanely. Unfortunately, this does not describe the majority of mass industrial-scale meat, dairy and egg production. In reaction to a series of undercover videos and photographs of dairy, poultry and pork operations showing unspeakable cruelty and abhorrent living conditions, several states in the US introduced so-called “ag-gag” laws (Landfried, 2013, p. 378). The legislation would criminalize any whistleblowing and undercover investigations seeking to expose such abuse of animal rights (Landfried, 2013). This secrecy not only runs counter to the right to free speech, but it also appears to be an admission of wrong-doing (Cohen, 2014). Who, except a guilty party, would attempt to enact laws that undermine transparency? Even more troubling is the implied understanding that as long as consumers remain ignorant of food production practices, they will continue to inadvertently condone the system (Faruqi, 2015). And while the cognitive dissonance required for people to consent to an objectionable system is arguably one of the fundamental tenets of the GFS, the growing awareness of its injustice is lending urgency and vigor to the alternative food movement (Hoogland, de Boer and Boersema, 2005). As the unscrupulous realities and repercussions of the GFS are further publicized – from exposés of livestock operations, to abuses of migrant farm labourers, to the wholesale dispossession of peasant farmers in the developing world – consumers and producers alike are seeking out alternatives.

Proponents of LFSs maintain that closing the gap between production and consumption can provide a meaningful solution to the ills of industrial food production. When consumers know how their food is produced and understand the demands the food system makes on farmers and ecosystems, they are more likely to make choices that allow them to advocate for land stewardship and livelihood protection (Rosset 1999; Svenfelt and Carlsson-Kanyama, 2010). Furthermore, FMs embody this reconnecting of production and consumption as they not only bring together farmers and eaters, but they are designed to promote interaction. From their ancient historical roots in Greece and Rome, where the marketplace was a site of civic engagement, FMs galvanize community development (Basil, 2012; Pyle, 1971). They provide a public gathering space that does not require purchase, but that does promote interaction and social enrichment. They are also places that promote education and food literacy, where customers can learn about the seasonal, ecological, political and economic conditions of food production (Gillespie et al., 2007; Svenfelt and Carlsson-Kanyama, 2010).

Another outcome of reconnecting consumers with the source of their food is the reestablishment of trust and confidence in the quality and safety of food products. Whereas distrust, dissociation and anonymity have come to typify the GFS, communication and trust are proving vital to maintaining sustainable food systems (O'Hara and Stagl, 2001). When food systems are embedded in our social lives and interactions, they take on ethical and moral considerations that are otherwise absent from the corporate industrial food system. Such embeddedness can "mediate self interest in place of a concern for the wider common good" (Sage, 2003, p. 47). In other words, when farmers and eaters have the opportunity to interact and share values, their decisions about production and consumption are no longer merely impersonal commercial transactions. Instead, food production and consumption become arenas of civic engagement, where personal values are expressed and where ignorance is replaced with awareness of the consequences of our actions and choices (Alkon, 2008; Hoogland, de Boer and Boersema, 2005).

Re-localizing food systems brings into focus the social significance of food. Hendrickson and Heffernan (2002) point out that food, far from being a mere commodity, occupies the socially complex realms of family, tradition, memory, comfort, culture, art, and many other intangible aspects of our "lifeworld" (p. 348). Meanwhile, we are increasingly seeing food relegated to the "economic and political spheres, the systems world where systems logic dominates" (Hendrickson and Heffernan, 2002, p. 349). These authors assert that re-localization of the food system can "protect the lifeworld from encroachment by the dominant logic of the systems world" (Hendrickson and Heffernan, 2002, p. 366). And according to the food system practitioners interviewed by Kloppenburg et al. (2000), maintaining links between food and our sociocultural activities is crucial to food system sustainability. These links can contribute to the protection of our health, the wellbeing of communities, and the welfare of the planet as they offset the harmful effects of the GFS.

Despite the fact that local food procurement and FMs still operate within a capitalist system of exchange, one that is built upon efficiency, profit-growth and competition, the distinction is made that local markets often organize around principles of social and environmental justice (Alkon, 2008; Andrée, Ballamingie and Sinclair-Waters, 2015). Some community members see this type of "morally embedded" (Alkon, 2008, p. 491) economic exchange as being their only recourse for taking a stand, for protesting the dominant system, for expressing their “living democracy” (Lappé and Lappé, 2004, p. 130), and for asserting their values (Andrée, Ballamingie and Sinclair-Waters, 2015). Lyson and Green (1999) refer to this as “community capitalism” (p. 138), a type of economic exchange that considers a community’s wellbeing as a crucial component of its long-term capital investment.

Summary

Sustainability efforts are becoming more and more important as the consequences of industrialized development are brought to light. As the globalization of the food system comes under intense criticism, food re-localization has arisen as an alternative worth exploring. These observations are made with the acknowledgement that the GFS has the potential to offer solutions to our environmental and nutritional problems, and that LFSs do not necessarily foster sustainability. However, the evidence and effects of several decades of food system globalization and the more recent movement toward re-localization, suggests that LFSs hold more promise for success. The claims that industrial agriculture and global distribution and processing networks hold the keys to solving world hunger and promoting food security, are proving unfounded and detrimental to genuine sustainability initiatives. Consequently, local food alternatives are receiving more academic analysis and media attention, as agricultural communities push toward greater opportunities for sustainably inclined farmers to create viable livelihoods. As well, consumers and advocates are demanding access to locally sourced foods and requesting the insertion of local food sustainability measures into policy and planning agendas (Community Food Assessment Partners, 2015). Playing a vital role in the establishment of thriving LFSs, FMs are recognized as uniquely equipped to bring about civic sustainability objectives. These trends provide hope to communities seeking to restore trust in their food, regain control over their food system and regenerate local food knowledge and culture.

Chapter 4: Methods

Introduction

This research is a community-based study using mixed methods, including questionnaires and semi-structured interviews for data collection. My partnership with the Haliburton community began in the fall and winter of 2014/2015. At this time, I was introduced to Abbey Gardens, a not-for-profit charity with a focus on sustainability, education, and local food initiatives. With funding provided by the Community-First: Impacts of Community Engagement (CFICE) program, I was invited to complete a research assistantship at Abbey Gardens over the summer of 2015. My immersion in the community was a valuable asset to my research, as it allowed me to become familiar with the group of people who would eventually become my research collaborators. In the fall of 2015, the Haliburton County Farmers' Market Association (HCFMA) approached me with a research proposal submitted through U-Links, a community-based research organization based in Haliburton County that brokers research between community groups and Trent University. The HCFMA operates three FMs in Haliburton County in the following locations: Haliburton Village (Tuesdays, noon - 4pm), Carnarvon (Fridays, noon - 4pm) and Minden (Saturdays, 10am - 2pm). Their research objectives were to discover the range of organizational strategies used at FMs across Ontario, and to identify best practices that could then be shared with other FM managers and administrators. As part of this research project, I was also hired to manage two of the HCFMA market locations over the summer of 2016, which provided the opportunity for participant observation. The project was undertaken as a collaborative study between the HCFMA and myself, the primary researcher. The group articulated their research interests in the following four sets of questions:

1. *What is the optimal type of governance structure for farmers' markets? What community characteristics are critical in determining this? What is the relationship, if any, between governance structure and size of market?*
2. *What type of management structure is most efficient and effective? What is the relationship, if any, between management structure, size of market, and type of community?*
3. *What is the most productive relationship with/among the vendors? What is the relationship, if any, between vendor characteristics, size of market, and type of community?*
4. *What is the most productive relationship with consumers? What is the relationship, if any, between the characteristics of a market's customers, size of market, and type of community?*

These questions provided the launching point from which to design the research instruments and as such, they served as guideposts throughout the project. While the questions are worded in absolute and evaluative terms (i.e. What is the optimal…the most efficient…the most productive…etc.), it was established through discussions with the host organization that the questionnaire and interview questions would aim to elicit narratives from each participant about what is and is not working well at their particular market.

The involvement of the HCFMA in the project, beyond articulating the research questions, included the following: 1) guiding the design of the research instruments, 2) collaboratively reviewing the questionnaire data, and 3) offering advice regarding this community-based project. Their involvement is consistent with collaborative approaches outlined by Chevalier and Buckles (2013). The HCFMA did not provide funding for the research beyond paying my wages for managerial duties, nor did the organization contribute to the written report that followed data analysis. Limiting their involvement mitigated any conflict of interest that may have arisen as a result of this partnership. Upon completion of the thesis, the results will be shared with the host organization.

Purpose of Chosen Methods

This study was conducted using questionnaires, interviews, and participant observation in a sequential fashion. In order to provide a comprehensive account of FMs as both measurable phenomena and complex social institutions, I chose a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data provided the means to examine the range of FM operational strategies and structures and allowed comparisons to be made, while the qualitative data shed light on individual markets, thus revealing their singularity. FMs represent an established category of direct marketing with defined traits, and yet they each exhibit a unique atmosphere and a distinct mode of operation. The research objectives aimed to reveal the common traits among FMs in Ontario, as well as to explore their differences.

Participant Recruitment and Area of Study

The study was limited to Ontario FMs in an effort to generate a manageable sample size. Accurate counts of FMs do not exist at this time for Canada or Ontario, and markets of every size and variety launch and fold with great frequency (Stephenson, Lev and Brewer, 2008). As well, recruitment was limited to markets affiliated with Farmers' Markets Ontario (FMO), an association that provides organizational and promotional support to FMs across the province. The research design limited participation in this way for two reasons: First, the FMO website hosts a publicly available membership database that displays market sizes, locations, vendor numbers, years in operation and contact information for 178 Ontario FMs (as of March 2017). This database provided an essential launching point from which to begin the recruitment process. Second, FMO requires affiliates to have a vendor pool of 50% + 1 primary agricultural producers. This means that the majority of the vendors are directly responsible for growing, raising or otherwise producing the products they're selling. Accordingly, FMO markets adhere to the provincial government guidelines for what constitutes a 'true farmers' market', thus qualifying them for exemption from the provincial Food Premises Regulation 562 under the Health

Protection and Promotion Act (ASPHIO, 2012). Exemption allows FMs to operate with fewer regulatory barriers than other food premises. By restricting the recruitment process in this way, I began with an established definition of FMs, thus helping to demarcate the criteria for participation.

It is important to note that none of the members of the HCFMA serve on the Board of FMO, and there is no competitive relationship between participating markets and the HCFMA. Before recruitment began, I contacted the Membership Outreach Director of FMO as a courtesy, informing her of the research project and offering to share the final report upon completion. Permission to conduct the research was not requested, as this project is not investigating FMO, but FMs in general. Clarification on this point was required for the Research Ethics Board of Trent University to understand the nature of the relationships between the primary researcher, the host organization, the research participants, and the overarching organization (FMO).

The recruitment process began with an outreach email sent to the contact names provided on the FMO database. I introduced myself, explained my association with the HCFMA, and outlined the research project and its objectives. I described the questionnaire and explained that participation would be confidential unless participants permitted the disclosure of their identities. Finally, I asked that the email be passed along to the appropriate market representative if the recipient was not in a position to take part in the study.

Data Collection

I received 58 responses indicating interest in participating in the questionnaire (Appendix 1). The questionnaire was emailed as a PDF attachment to the willing participants along with a consent form. At this point, the data collection became somewhat challenging. While several participants were able to complete the PDF questionnaire, others experienced some difficulty. I then sent the questionnaire as a Word document, but for some participants this did not resolve the issue. Finally, I posted the questionnaire on the Trent survey platform, Qualtrics. It is likely that these technological hiccups discouraged some potential participants from following through. The decision to distribute the questionnaire as an email attachment was done with the intention of reaching a wide pool of participants regardless of their technological capabilities. This intention appears to have backfired to some degree.

The questionnaire was designed to collect up-to-date details about each market including hours of operation, months active, vendor numbers, and average distance travelled by both vendors and customers. This allowed the markets to be categorized, however, the data required some interpretation. For example, a market may have reported their year established as 2014, whereas this relatively new market is simply the current iteration of a market that has been operating since the 1800s and has gone through some recent change in location and governance. The response supplied refers only to the latest rendition of a market with a long history – a notable detail with relevance to this market's operational structure, as will be explored in subsequent chapters.

In order to capture some of these nuances, sections of the questionnaire allowed for elaboration. Participants were invited to briefly describe characteristics of their market site, agricultural performance in their region, vendor turnover, and other market details along with the more structured questions mentioned above. This qualitative exploration was further developed during the interview phase of the study. Creswell (2014) characterizes this approach as explanatory, sequential mixed methods and endorses the value of qualitative inquiry following and building upon the results of quantitative data. The questionnaire responses provided a data set from which to identify categories of Ontario FMs, and the sample size for the interviews was large enough to yield valuable insights into the unique traits of individual markets. Of the 58 interested respondents, 41 questionnaires were completed.

The final section of the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate their willingness to participate in the follow-up interview. The goal was to compile interview data from 18 markets located in a range of urban and rural settings. Thirty-one respondents were willing to be interviewed, and these markets were then categorized according to size (based on vendor numbers) and their community type (based on the population of the city, town or municipality in which they are located). This categorization was meant to allow a wide variety of market sizes and types to be represented in the interview data. Three market size categories were identified, and the goal was to include 6 markets in each category. These groupings were guided by Stephenson's (2008) discussion of FM sizes. Market size classification is often self-assigned and relative, in that a

30-vendor market may be considered small because other local markets have three times the number of vendors and a much larger footprint. However, that same market might be considered large to a manager who oversees 5-8 vendors, a category Stephenson (2008) refers to as “micro” markets (p. 91). The questionnaire asked respondents to report the typical number of vendors at their FM, with the understanding that some of the participating markets operate year-round and have a vendor pool that scales according to season. With this in mind, I focused on the vendor numbers typical of the peak season (usually July/August) to group the markets into size categories. Guided by market sizes used by the USDA in their national survey of FMs conducted in 2000 (Payne, 2002), I developed categories based on the range of vendor numbers in my sample group. The smallest market reported 5-10 vendors over the season, while the largest reported 90-100 vendors. Markets with fewer than 20 vendors were designated as *small*, markets with 20 to 49 vendors were *medium*-sized, and markets of 50 or more vendors were classified as *large.*

Community size also plays a role in how the participating markets were categorized and recruited. This was determined by first noting the population of the city, town, municipality or county in which the markets operate, and then categorizing them according to Statistics Canada’s classifications of population centres (Statistics Canada, 2011). While Stats Canada defines population centres of 0 to 999 people as *rural*, and those with 1,000 to 29,999 people as *small population centres*, I have grouped these together and identified populations with fewer than 30,000 people as *small population centres*. The next size category, *medium population centres*, contain 30,000 to 99,999 residents, and *large population centres* (also referred to as *urban* by Stats Canada), contain 100,000 people or more (Statistics Canada, 2011).

There was some attempt to include markets from a variety of geographical regions, particularly northern Ontario, so that any challenges unique to markets in these regions might come to light. Figure 1. shows approximate locations of the participating interview subjects and illustrates the geographic distribution of these markets.

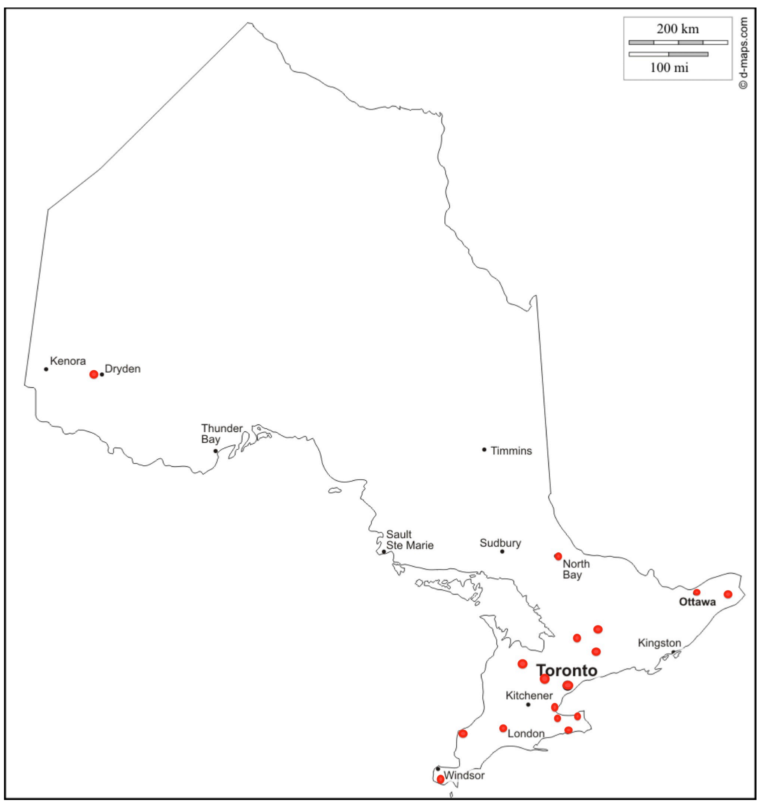

Figure 1. Geographic distribution of interview subjects.

During the interview phase, while setting up an appropriate date and time for the interview, one of the participants withdrew from the study. She explained that she was experiencing conflicts within her market and felt uncomfortable taking part in the study, despite being reassured that her participation would be confidential. In all, 17 interviews were conducted between May and August 2016, with the majority having been completed by June 2016. Table 1. shows the number of participating markets in each size category.

Table 1. Interviewee markets: Size and population distribution

	Small Markets	Medium Markets	Large Markets
Large Population Centres	2	2	1
Medium Population Centres	0	2	2
Small Population Centres	5	3	0

The interviews were semi-structured and were conducted by phone and audio-recorded. Participants were asked to recite a short script before the interview began, declaring their consent to be recorded. Most of the interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes with the exception of one that lasted only 8 minutes due to the interviewee being pressed for time. The interview contained 17 questions (Appendix 2) covering five central themes: governance, management, vendors, customers, and market description/evaluation. The questions encouraged participants to:

- describe their market as they would to a visitor or new resident in the region, including the overall values and philosophy of the market
- describe and provide a rationale for their market's governance and management structures
- describe the vendor pool and vendor turn-over, and speculate about motivations for selling at their market
- characterize their typical customer base, the degree of customer loyalty, and motivations for shopping at their market
- outline their market's greatest strengths and challenges
- and summarize future plans and agenda items

The researcher and host organization collaboratively designed the interview questions based on the original research questions set out in the U-Links proposal.

Participant Observation

Following the interview phase, I had the opportunity to incorporate participant observation in my research methods. This took place over the summer of 2016, but the preparation for this process began the year before. Over the summer of 2015, with the support of CFICE funding, I spent five months living and working in Haliburton County, at which time I laid the groundwork for this research. As a result of contacts I made during my stay, I was asked to take on the research project proposed by the HCFMA. In the fall of 2015, I was hired as assistant manager of the FMs in Haliburton County for the following season. My contract began in April 2016 and continued until October 2016. The position involved attending each of the Carnarvon and Minden markets on Fridays and Saturdays, helping with the layout of the vendor stalls, answering questions and resolving conflicts, collecting table fees, and tending the HCFMA information table. I also attended board meetings and met regularly with the general market manager to discuss problems and receive guidance.

During my time as assistant manager, I was not conducting and recording interviews with vendors, customers or board members. I did however keep a journal of notes and reflections on the weekly interactions between and among vendors, customers, volunteers, and myself. This contributed to my research in that I was directly involved with events and decision-making processes that my interviewees had mentioned during data collection. This allowed me to interpret the subtext underlying the interviews. In other words, I realized that there was more to the stories shared in the interviews than could be disclosed in a 45-minute conversation. As an adjunct to less immersive methods of research, participant observation provided a window into the subtle and complex circumstances that influence FM operations.

While participant observation of the entire sample group would have been impractical given the number of markets and their geographic distribution, being involved with one FM for an entire season provided insight into how this particular FM was structured and managed on a weekly basis. I observed how governance plays out, how decisions can lead to conflict and require compromise, and how the interplay between individual vendor goals and the goals of the market can create friction.

Participant observation further influenced my overall understanding of the research in the following ways:

- the purpose of the research and the goals of the host organization became more pronounced given some of the challenges facing the HCFMA markets
- my experiences and observations clarified how my research might serve these goals
- my role as assistant market manager broadened my understanding of the diplomacy required to oversee a collaborative enterprise that involves individual business owners

The literature on participant observation supports its capacity to provide a holistic understanding of the research subjects, particularly when used in conjunction with other methods of data collection (Berg, 2001; DeWalt and DeWalt, 2011). It allows the researcher to attain insider status, build trust, and observe and experience the social context of subjects in their "natural setting" (Kawulich, 2005, p. 2). Methodology literature also distinguishes between covert and overt participant observation (Kawulich, 2005). While I made no secret of the fact that I was conducting research on FMs, neither did I make a point of informing all members of the market community that I was recording my observations and reflections on the daily proceedings of the market. By treating my research as incidental I avoided making people uncomfortable or causing them to be on their best behaviour by formally notifying them of my intentions. Similarly, I did not wish to hide what I was doing lest I assume the perspective of an undercover investigator. Accordingly, the observations I made were generic, and not attributed to any particular individuals.

The use of participant observation for this project introduced some limitations along with the benefits. While it allowed direct engagement with the research context, my experience as assistant manager is not necessarily typical of other FMs. This therefore limits the usefulness of my observations to the broader themes of the work. Despite this limitation, my observations influenced data analysis as I reflected on the subtext of the interviews, with the understanding that these speculations are not conclusive. Furthermore, I acknowledge that my observations were informed by my position in the organization. My role as assistant manager dictated the quality of interactions I had with the various members of the market community. Had I observed markets from the perspective of a customer, a volunteer or a vendor, my impressions and interpretations would have differed accordingly. These concerns will be more fully explored in the following examination of positionality and bias.

Position Statement and Consideration of Bias

Reflecting on and acknowledging one's personal frame of reference is an accepted and prescribed exercise in many fields of social research (deMarrais and Lapan, 2004; Hopkins, 2007; Moore, 2012). It brings to the fore the various subjective and value-laden lenses through which research is filtered during all phases of study. This includes the worldviews, value systems, assumptions, and codes of ethics that both researcher and researched bring to the table. One's positionality influences how research objectives and methods are framed, how research subjects are perceived, and how data is interpreted (Hopkins, 2007). Therefore, every effort to acknowledge the impact of these variables, insofar as they shape the research, serves to strengthen the validity of the work. What follows is a statement of my positionality, which outlines my interest in sustainability and food systems, my core beliefs as they pertain to the research topic, and the assumptions that drive the research. As well, I describe several sources of potential bias, and explain how these have been mitigated.

My research is founded on a number of assumptions that have developed over the course of my examination of food system and sustainability literature. The following principles form my position:

- the escalating homogenization of agricultural practices, global supply chains, and food cultures is unsustainable and exceedingly destructive to our environmental and human wellbeing
- localized food systems are a feasible and sustainable alternative to the current global food system; further to this, building local food system

resilience will do more to ensure planetary food security than will global food system consolidation

- small-scale and ecologically-motivated food producers are a marginalized and increasingly endangered group, and determining how they can be supported and sustained is of critical importance
- FMs are central to local food systems in North America, and they provide much-needed opportunities for small-scale, alternative agricultural systems to thrive

The above principles are inspired and substantiated by the work of Walden Bello (2009), Thomas Lyson (2004), Francis Moore Lappé (1998), Raj Patel (2007), Jennifer Clapp (2012), Frederick Kirschenmann (2010b), and Haroon Akram-Lodhi (2013), to name only a few. The works of these authors, along with my studies in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems, and my work with numerous non-profit food sustainability initiatives, have cemented my conviction that the dominant food system paradigm must change. Furthermore, I believe that community and grassroots efforts will play a major role in effecting change. Bringing such strong convictions into a research context runs the risk of producing partial results, and being blinded to findings that don't fit my worldview. However, I am also committed to exposing bias and mitigating its impact wherever possible.

This study presents the following opportunities for bias and partiality to arise:

1) *Research participants were limited to FMO markets*. As stated above, FMO markets comply with the provincial government definition of a 'true farmers' market', thus disqualifying other public markets like flea markets, wholesale markets and bazaars that do not require primary agricultural producers to make up the majority of stall-holders. However, there are numerous FMs in Ontario that have chosen not to become members of FMO but who comply with the above definition. This research does not discount the legitimacy of these markets, but merely aimed to begin with a sample using established parameters. Further, it allowed for control of some of the variables at play in FM operations, thus revealing patterns that may not have been apparent had we cast a wider net. One could argue that this sample is not representative of Ontario markets and that including markets that choose not to align themselves with FMO could yield very different and equally valuable results. This argument suggests an opportunity for further research. It must also be noted that I made this decision jointly with the host organization. Together we discussed the merits of limiting the scope of the research this way. One benefit is that, being an FMO affiliate themselves, the HCFMA could learn from other markets with similar status, operating under similar regulatory conditions.
2) *Collaboration and employment with the HCFMA may unintentionally influence my analysis of the data*. Despite this being a community-driven project, the supervisory committee and the Research Ethics Board of Trent University required that the primary researcher be solely responsible for data analysis

and interpretation. This addresses any tendency for the host organization to override my analytical perspective. Accordingly, the host organization has not contributed to the process of data analysis or to the framing of the results. However, being employed by the HCFMA still introduced the potential for research bias. It is reasonable to speculate that as an employee, I would feel compelled to present results that favour the position of the HCFMA. Since data analysis took place following the termination of my contract, my obligation to the organization remains only to present valid and rigorous research. Furthermore, I am confident that the HCFMA is open and eager to accept recommendations of best practices that diverge from their mode of operation.

3) *Research participants brought their own positionality to bear on the data.* This emerged as an underlying concern throughout the research process and I endeavoured to remain mindful of its influence on the work. Since the opportunity to develop trust with the participants was limited to a short phone-call, my role as an outsider remained firmly in place. The majority of my interviewees were in managerial or supervisory roles, and likely felt a responsibility to present their market in a positive, and even promotional light. Furthermore, there were moments during interviews when I got the impression that participants were hedging or being diplomatic in the sense that they were hinting at challenges, but were reluctant to reveal too much for fear of appearing critical or disparaging. It would be onerous to attempt

to interpret all of the subtext here, but it is worth noting the potential for the data to be distorted in this way.

4) *Struggling markets may have selected themselves out of the sample group.* As the aforementioned market manager who bowed out of the study illustrates, market administrators experiencing difficulty would be unlikely to participate in this research. Despite the value of including such narratives, convincing people to talk about their struggling or failing markets would require more trust-building than this study accommodated. As a result, the majority of the interviewees presented a picture of successful and thriving markets. Some degree of balance was achieved by asking people to describe their markets' greatest challenges, and certainly, many participants shared stories of ongoing hurdles. But overwhelmingly, I formed the impression that these markets were working well and flourishing.

Data Analysis

Questionnaire data was organized into a spreadsheet, whereby responses appeared in columns enabling me to visualize patterns and ranges of responses. The data was primarily used to inform the recruitment of interview subjects, as it revealed the operating circumstances of each of the participating markets and revealed the range of these circumstances.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim using Wreally Studies Transcribe software. Using the research questions as a guide, I coded the data by isolating references to each of the broad narrative topics: 1) governance and management, 2) vendor relationships, and 3) customer relationships. Within each topic, I then identified recurring themes and sub-themes of discussion. For example, interview responses regarding customer relationships fell into four themes, one of which, community-mindedness and partnership, was sub-divided into references to customer demographics, customer engagement in market operations, volunteerism, and customer loyalty. These themes and sub-themes were arranged into tables into which I inserted relevant quotations and anecdotes. Analyzing the interview data was necessarily an inductive and interpretive process that brings my positionality to bear. This process of "winnowing" (Creswell, 2013, p. 245) the data required that I interpret which data were relevant to the research questions and which were not, an approach compatible with qualitative data analysis literature.

Chapter 5: Results and Discussion

Introduction

The research questions and the findings that address them are presented below. The first two sets of questions pertain to FM governance and management structures and to the connections that may exist between these structures, market size and community type. In this context, community characteristics refer to urban-ness and rural-ness according to population sizes outlined in Chapter 4. The third and fourth questions deal with vendor and customer relationships and again they ask what correlation might exist between these relationships and market size and community type.

Governance and Management

The Research Questions

The interviews produced responses linking the roles of governance and management as one interconnected decision-making body. Most of the interview subjects were in managerial roles, thus their responses often illustrated how governance was filtered through their own position within the FM structure. The terms ‘administrative body’ and ‘administration’ are used to describe the individuals, groups, and systems responsible for carrying out the day-to-day operations of the markets. The first two sets of research questions are:

1. *What is the optimal type of governance structure for farmers' markets? What community characteristics are critical in determining this? What is the relationship, if any, between governance structure and size of market?*

2. *What type of management structure is most efficient and effective? What is the relationship, if any, between management structure, size of market, and type of community?*

In posing these questions, the host organization understood that a definitive measure of optimal, efficient, and effective governance and management is not calculable. Evaluating the success of markets' decision-making and administrative bodies is tricky, given that there are few reliable and collectively assigned standards. Financial figures or measures of customer satisfaction might indicate a degree of business prosperity, but these statistics were neither accessible nor viable for this project. Gathering vendors' financial records is ethically challenging, and customer survey data is only sparsely available, informally collected in many cases, and as such, only marginally accurate or representative. Thus, market assessments were revealed in the participants' anecdotes about the triumphs and trials experienced at their markets. These are admittedly subjective opinions of the market employees and volunteers concerning FM decision-making.

Decision-Making and Approaches to Market Administration

Each of the markets included in my interview data took a slightly different approach to governance and management, though several had similar structures. Of the seventeen market administrators interviewed, seven described the governing body as a Board of Directors (BOD), four markets were governed by a committee or association, and three were governed in partnership with a Business Association or a Business Improvement Area (BIA). Nine of the interviewees self-identified as the manager; seven used a different title for themselves (including supervisor, site manager, coordinator, president, or treasurer), but described their role as being managerial; and one was not currently the manager but had been in the past. Thirteen participating markets had paid managerial positions, while four had volunteers in that role.

In terms of what was, or was not working well regarding governance and management, the majority of the interviewees provided examples of both. Only five of the seventeen markets interviewed mentioned no aspects of their governance and management needing improvement or creating challenges. These performance reports tended to touch on two broad themes:

1. Formality of standard governance protocols
2. Vendor involvement and the democratic nature of decision-making

The first of these refers to whether or not a market designates vendor rules and regulations, by-laws, strategic plans, conflict-resolution strategies, codes of conduct, and other operational documentation. The interview data revealed a diversity of attitudes toward codifying administrative approaches and strategies. In outlining these processes, eight markets were described or came across as having an informal or “loose” governance structure. Five interviewees described comparatively formal and official structures. Two markets were described as being in transition toward more formality, and two came across in neutral terms (neither formal nor informal). Formalization of market governance and administration was generally described as a necessity for professional market operations, as a goal to aspire to, or as a prerequisite for conflict-resolution and rule enforcement. Although none of the managers I spoke with mentioned the Not-For-Profit Corporations Act, the incorporated markets would be inclined to formalize as required by the rules of incorporation (Not-for-Profit…,2010). Meanwhile, some of the more informally run markets valued their ability to operate with limited bureaucracy. As well, formalization of market operations were often associated with added staffing costs and time-consuming red tape. And despite research suggesting that formal governance is favoured by urban FMs, while rural markets prefer a hands-off approach, my data does not support this finding (Betz and Farmer, 2016). Instead, I observed that three of the five urban FMs in my sample preferred informal methods of governance, and in two cases, this was associated with a desire to maintain a neighbourly, ‘grassrootsy’ atmosphere.

Markets using informal governance structures conceded some shortcomings resulting from the simplified approach. In one case, extra features, like creative promotions and additional programming (e.g. special events, theme stalls, musicians, etc.), which are typically managers’ responsibilities, were sacrificed in the interest of streamlining operations. Another interviewee mentioned having a "loose" approach to governance and management and then went on to describe many years of administrative growing pains that were only recently subsiding into smooth operations. Though not explicitly linked, it is likely that this market would have benefited from more formalization early on.

In reviewing FM websites, I observed a variety of approaches to communicating rules and regulations. These ranged from one-page lists of basic vendor guidelines, to extensive and official constitutions and by-laws delineating fees, finances, executive duties, elections, and more. Of course, not all FMs make their administrative paperwork available to the public, but the variety of records that I accessed mirrored the variety of approaches described in the interview narratives. This range of documentation and the diversity of attitudes in the interviews suggest that there is little consensus on best practices in this regard, however, some research indicates that formalized governance is associated with greater market success. Betz and Farmer (2016) examined the characteristics and effects of what they called "low- and high-governance" (p. 1423) structures at FMs. Their findings suggest that high-governance markets (those with more formalized rules, paid staff, a clear definition of 'local' food, and/or affiliation with an external organization) contribute to increased customer satisfaction, greater municipal support, and more efficient market operations (Betz and Farmer, 2016). Similarly, research conducted with the support of FMO in 1998 found that vendors prefer FMs to have comprehensive regulations that are adequately enforced to ensure fair treatment (Cummings, Kora and Murray, 1999). And a 2010 report published by the Greenbelt Farmers' Market Network highlighted the importance of formal record keeping among market administrators to help with future planning and to attract sponsorships or bolster grant applications (Greenbelt Farmers' Market Network, 2010). These findings suggest that FMs that establish formal approaches to governance and management are more likely to foster efficiency, equity, and sustainability.

A second aspect of governance and management that appears to influence market performance is the degree of democratic engagement among market stakeholders. Gantla and Lev (2015) compared FMs with three different ownership models (vendor-led, community-led, and sub-entity markets led by external organizations) and noted the degree of vendor representation with each approach. The authors observed that vendor-led markets, while prioritizing the agency of the vendors, struggle to foster the community ties deemed necessary for market success, and vendors at these markets tended to neglect the cultural and promotional activities that enhance market performance. Conversely, sub-entity markets were characterized as "relatively poorly linked to their vendors" (Gantla and Lev, 2015, p. 50). The happy medium appears to be community-led markets that "benefit from strong community ties" (p. 49) but whose operations "depend on vendor representation on the governing body" (Gantla and Lev, 2015, p. 49).

The inclusion of vendors in decision-making and market administration was noted as being critical to harmonious operations in many of the interviews I conducted. Of the seventeen interviewees, sixteen mentioned vendor involvement. Of these, six described their governing body as being made up of all or almost all vendors, while three others noted that all vendors are consulted during decision-making. Four markets have seats on their governance board or committee allocated to vendors, under the following arrangements: 1) three of nine committee members are vendors; 2) three of eight committee members are vendors; 3) four of eight committee members are vendors, and 4) half of the committee are vendors (unspecified total). Two of the sixteen interviewees reported little to no vendor involvement in governance, and one noted that a few key vendors were consulted only when necessary. The variety of approaches here indicates that there is no typical or accepted way to involve vendors in running a FM. It follows that there are differing priorities that dictate these variances. Several interviewees noted that an efficient and well-run market allows vendors the freedom to focus on production, sales, and customer service, while the administrative and operational details need not be their concern. Others insisted that democratic principles or consensus are necessary for a market to operate with equity and amity. The greater the vendor involvement in decision-making, the greater the complexity of proceedings, but this was considered a worthwhile inconvenience in favour of hearing from all or most members of the FM community. Two main issues that were reported from the vendor-run markets were: 1) vendors (often farmers) already struggle to find enough hours in the day to stay on top of production; add to that a volunteer board position, and their days just get that much longer. And 2) the potential for conflict of interest and non-neutrality in decision-making is introduced when vendors run the market. These same challenges were outlined in a study conducted at FMs in Upstate New York (Griffin and Frongillo, 2003), which acknowledged the dual obstacles of busy schedules coupled with the need to accommodate the conflicting viewpoints of farmers. Furthermore, it can prove infeasible for small business owners to sacrifice their own financial interest for the greater good of the market when necessary. As was noted in two of my interviews, FMs are “unbelievably political” and community-mindedness may be all the more challenging considering these small business owners often struggle to make ends meet. This friction will be discussed in more detail when vendor relationships are examined below. Regardless of these challenges, most of the participants saw great value in striving for vendor engagement, and underscored the need for communication and transparency wherever possible. Further to this, findings from the FMO funded research in 1998 revealed that representation of vendors on governing boards helps to foster vendor loyalty, and demonstrates a market’s deep commitment to supporting local food producers. This mutual support is considered essential to the health of a FM (Cummings, Kora and Murray, 1999).

Market Size and Attitudes Toward Growth

It may seem self-evident that the growth of a FM is an indicator of success and prosperity. Certainly, Stephenson (2008) has demonstrated that markets in the *micro* and *small* size categories (between five and twenty vendors) are at higher risk of failure than markets with vendor numbers greater than twenty. This vulnerability is often due to insufficient product supply and diversity, but it can also stem from lean operating budgets that don't allow for promotions, administrative staffing, and other essential enterprise supports. Market viability and resilience appear to be strongly linked to what one market manager called "sustainable growth". This entailed gradually increasing vendor stall capacity, maintaining a balance between customer demand and product supply and selection, considering parking capacity, and retaining a satisfied vendor pool. As well, this market was looking into site development and promotional outreach in order to maintain steady expansion. Another manager was in the process of organizing two "spin-off" markets due to the popularity of the original FM. This market was also looking into site expansion and street closure to accommodate the growth.

Indeed, ten of the market administrators I interviewed spoke of growth as a target, with seven of those in the process of expansion and three reporting that growth was not currently possible, due to a low operating budget, lack of customers, site limitations, or shortage of local vendors. Meanwhile, five interviewees described smallness or size maintenance as a goal. And the remaining two markets were divided on the issue – in one case, the manager was gunning for growth, but the governing body preferred the status quo, while in the other case, the interviewee appeared to be conflicted on the issue. These differences speak to the fact that FM expansion beyond the minimum size required for stability has advantages and drawbacks. Growing a market can both respond to and boost demand for local food, it can create more sales opportunities for existing and new vendors, it can help raise FM operating budgets to accommodate advertising and paid staff, and it can allow for additional programming like special events or entertainment. But growing a market also entails risk. Markets planning a second or third location and market day risk reaching a supply saturation point at which neither location captures the attendance and sales that the original location enjoyed. Markets hoping to expand into year-round operations need to consider the production and storage capacities of local producers for winter produce, and whether demand will justify the need for indoor facilities and utilities. As well, many markets take pride in smallness, often associating it with accessibility and a neighbourly or familial atmosphere.

Finally, a more complicated aspect of market size and growth deals with management resources. Along with market size, Stephenson (2008) found that several aspects of management influence a FM's tendency to thrive or fail, including degree of management experience, effort-to-compensation ratio, and manager turnover. Small markets tend to forgo hiring a paid manager and instead rely on volunteers or vendors to oversee market administration. This was reflected in both my questionnaire and interview data. The questionnaires showed that markets with unpaid managers, or no management staff had an average of nineteen vendors, while the larger markets with vendor numbers averaging thirty-eight, had at least one paid manager. The various staffing arrangements of these larger markets included the following: three paid managers plus an unpaid assistant, two paid managers, one paid manager plus two unpaid assistants, and one paid manager plus one unpaid assistant. Relying on volunteer management has the benefit of keeping table fees affordable, and speaks to the relative simplicity of running a market with a handful of vendors. As FMs grow however, the degree of complexity increases. Decision-making begins to demand a governing body, regulations and by-laws need to be drafted, and the vendor application process requires more attention. Generally, the time and effort required to operate a FM increase relative to the number of vendors. This is cause for consideration, as market failure correlates with poorly compensated and/or overworked managers (Stephenson, 2008). In other words, if markets prioritize growth, they ought to also prioritize paid staff with appropriate workloads. Research conducted by the Greenbelt Farmers' Market Network supports this assertion, noting that market managers "should be receiving a living wage in order to continue their commitment to the job" (Greenbelt Farmers' Market Network, 2010, p. 2).

The interview narratives revealed the challenge of finding the balance between affordable table fees and fair wages for management, between sustainable growth and low-maintenance administration, and between low operating costs and retention of dedicated staff with the time and energy to promote the market and keep it running smoothly. One interviewee said that adding to their vendor pool allowed them to respond to growing demand, but potential expansion would be limited to around forty vendors, noting that any more would be difficult to manage. Another interviewee described his market as being too small to afford to pay a manager, thus highlighting a frustrating catch-22: in order to accommodate staffing wages, FMs need to collect more table fees (i.e. recruit more vendors), yet adding vendors means added management functions. Furthermore, adding vendors also requires a coordinated effort to attract more customers, which is often done through outreach and additional programming – tasks usually delegated to the manager. Synchronizing this expansion smoothly is a challenge for many markets. Two interviewees mentioned raising table fees as another way to augment staff wages. But in both cases, this alternative was considered distasteful as it clashed with the goal of providing accessible and affordable marketing outlets for local agricultural producers and entrepreneurs. Raising table fees would mean fewer profits for vendors, and may preclude fledgling businesses from having the opportunity to present their product to the public. Navigating market growth involves numerous interwoven aspects of FM operation and requires considerable deliberation.

Market Age and Historical Legacy

Of the forty-one markets that participated in the questionnaire, twenty-one had been operating for more than ten years, while the remaining twenty were ten years old or younger. The markets ranged in age from two years to 191 years in operation, with the average age being twenty-eight years running.

This range was fairly well represented in my interview data, with the ages spanning two years to 110 years and an average age of twenty-two years in operation. The age of a market appears to play a significant role in how it is governed and managed. Certainly, long-standing markets have had years of experience to draw from when making decisions. Meanwhile, assessing the footing of a market is difficult to do in its first few years in operation. Newer markets are often focused on growth, finding the right vendor balance, and establishing a stable customer base. Market prosperity is often precarious during those first years, partly due to the tendency to start small (which was shown above to be a risk factor itself), but also due to the learning curve typical of starting a new enterprise. Stephenson (2008) found that inexperience was linked to the failure of new markets and that during the first five years in operation, FMs are particularly vulnerable. Some of the managers of older FMs in this study noted that their enduring status represented a great strength, inspiring loyalty from both vendors and customers. One of these older markets was described as having stayed relatively unchanged for over fifteen years, and when asked to reflect on future goals, they intend to “keep on the same path.” However, some themes that arose from my interview narratives suggest that newer markets have a few advantages over those with longer legacies.

Representatives of the youngest FMs in my study showed a tendency for great enthusiasm and energy in describing their markets. These interviewees were often focused on strategies for improving their operation, and were open to trying innovative approaches. The manager of the youngest market in my dataset was proud to describe the numerous ways in which she and the rest of the governing body were expanding their market, discovering innovative promotional avenues, and remaining committed to learning along the way. On the other hand, a few of the older participating markets gave the impression of stagnation or complacency. While some representatives of older FMs expressed satisfaction with the status quo, in several cases this sense of stasis might have been hindering their prosperity. In fairness, these impressions are purely speculative and cannot lead to any concrete conclusions. It is possible that my interpretations of an interviewee's enthusiasm or complacency have more to do with their tone of voice during the interview than with the way they govern their market. However, there does appear to be evidence that older markets risk becoming set in their ways.

One twenty-five year old market, despite its age, had yet to establish enough financial stability to hire a manager, which prevented the incorporation of the additional programming and outreach they needed to prosper. Another market manager described a long struggle to achieve stability in their administration, and despite their eighteen years in operation, they still grapple with poor customer turnout. A third market had recently hired a new manager eager to institute some fresh ideas, but who was encountering resistance from the long established governing body. She noted, "…it's hard to convince farmers who've been doing this the same way for a hundred years that change is good." Alluding to the risk of stagnation, another interviewee deemed the history and consistency of his market as one of its greatest strengths, but that he faced the associated challenge of keeping the market “fresh and invigorated on an ongoing basis.” Further, this manager described a recent change in the governance structure that had injected some much needed efficiency and expertise, but noted that this shift had not been easy, causing some “ruffled feathers” and threatening the security of the status quo. Without knowing the full history of each of these markets, speculation regarding the link between longevity and stagnation cannot be substantiated. However, the above examples suggest the need for FMs to remain flexible and adaptable when necessary. Fortunately, resistance to change was not characteristic of the majority of the participating markets and in most cases, regardless of age, the FMs in this study were committed to continually improving upon their operations.

Market Adaptability and Sustainability

As mentioned above, a FM’s success and wellbeing are contingent on their resilience to change, whether internal (e.g. retiring board-members, staff turnover, site expansion), or external (e.g. changes in city policy, availability of external support, customer fluctuations). Discussions of how governing and administrative bodies resist change and adapt to change arose during almost every interview. One recurring theme touched on succession planning for both administrative bodies, and for agricultural vendors. Several managers expressed concern about their ability to transition out of their role and bring on new staff with as little disruption as possible. Uneasy about such change, one manager said, “the challenge is to make it sustainable and keep it strong…it’s just me keeping it a fixture and keeping the integrity.” She feared passing the reins to someone who didn’t understand the central philosophy of the market – that is, to remain “grassrootsy” and to serve the needs of local food producers. To address these concerns, several interviewees expressed the need for clear and extensive procedural documentation so that new hires or board members would have sufficient criteria for decision-making. This type of planning and documentation has the added benefit of providing a framework for conflict resolution, should that ever become an issue.

Having a strategy in place for responding to diminishing agricultural vendors is also a concern for some markets. Certainly, demographic statistics reveal that the average age of farmers is creeping ever upward, and the younger generation’s interest in farming is dwindling (Beaulieu, 2011). This trend was apparent in some of the FMs I studied and will likely continue to strain the industry if it persists. One manager has responded to this threat by focusing on educating young community members about the importance and the joys of growing food. She figures that planting those seeds with schoolchildren might be critical when future farmers are needed, but she also expressed a degree of urgency: “…we’re really trying, but the kids that we’re working with now are grade five and six, so that’s going to be another twenty years before they’re ready to do anything.” This urgency is being felt at other markets as well. One manager was wrestling with the decision to waive the ruling on reselling, to allow some non-local products in order to adapt to the decline of sufficient vendors in some key product categories. And during my time in Haliburton, I noticed an ongoing discussion about the pressing need to attract more agricultural producers to the region. Notably, the few markets that do not suffer from dwindling farmer vendors are the FMs in large population centres. Three of the interviewees, all operating in large cities, reported an abundance of new farmers and vendor applications each year. Still, succession planning for all members of the market community appears to be a critical step toward developing a sustainable FM.

Many interviewees also noted that market resilience hinges on the capacity to respond to changes in shopping and marketing trends. Several people were adopting online platforms as promotional tools, and one market had hired a consultant to help them "harness the power of social media." Another market had started an online co-op to explore new ways of buying and selling agricultural products. In response to changes in the retail landscape, one manager noted, "…it's a different market than it used to be ten years ago…you have to be innovative. You have to be ready to look at the way you promote farm products differently." And another manager spoke of the fact that people rarely carry cash anymore. In response, she was looking into the logistics of having an ATM installed at the market site. While changing with the times was often cited as necessary for establishing resilience, the need to protect the core mandate of the market was also prioritized.

Another important aspect of FM sustainability pertains to a market's ability to adapt to externally imposed changes. Because many markets are subject to the whims of the city or municipality, they may find themselves having to adjust to policy changes, location upgrades, or parking conflicts. Being prepared to weather such developments smoothly and amicably is critical to the long-term success of a market. During many of my interviews, I heard stories of unexpected changes that required nimble responses. In one case, the FM governing body had established an arrangement with the city whereby parking spaces were made available to vendors at an affordable rate. Recently, however, this arrangement was under review and the notion of having to pay regular parking rates was cause for significant concern about how the market would survive such a change. Another market, with a long-standing relationship with the city, had endured a variety of policy changes as the city responded to the influx of subsequent FMs to the area. This interviewee reported, "…We've had to keep shifting and reinventing things about how the market has been run" in response to these external forces. This same market faces further transition as their winter market structure undergoes renovation at the behest of the city. While these upgrades are welcome, the lack of transparency and input into how the renovations will take place does not sit well with this manager.

One of the markets in this study illustrates how unexpected change can cause considerable disruption to a market's wellbeing. This market has suffered greatly as a result of city-imposed site changes. Several years ago, the permanent market site was designated for renovation by the city. The market moved to a temporary location in the meantime, a transition that went smoothly as the temporary site was valued for its ample green space. The trouble began with the reinstatement back to the newly renovated space. The market moved in before renovations were complete, which caused a degree of disruption, but other factors that affected their performance were the loss of free parking for customers, and the loss of green space, which patrons had come to appreciate. The market experienced a notable loss of vendors and customers over this period. As well, the manager reported that the city, in redesigning the space, had not taken the FM into consideration in their plans. Fortunately this market was back on their feet and looking forward to a successful season, but the adjustment had been deeply unsettling. The manager spoke of this series of events as "a very devastating time of the market…there was a bit of an onslaught…there was no chance to slowly adapt or get ready." Two other markets in my sample group were embarking on similar city-imposed site renovations and both expressed concern about the lack of consultation in the proceedings. These scenarios draw attention to the vulnerability of FMs as stakeholders within municipal planning procedures. One manager pointed out that many seasonal FMs occupy their sites for only seventeen to twenty-seven days out of the year, and usually for no more than four to six hours at a stretch. With this in mind, it is not surprising that the needs of a FM community may be considered relatively low priority in city planning strategies. The role that municipal groups and other external entities play in the wellbeing of FMs was another common thread that emerged from the interviews, and these relationships will be considered in more detail below.

The Influence of External Organizations in Farmers' Market Operations

As community-based enterprises, FMs are inherently affected by the various external organizations with which they come into contact. At the very least, markets must interact with the municipal structures through which the market site is negotiated. Beyond that, many FMs form partnerships with entities such as Business Improvement Areas (BIA), Community Futures groups, Chambers of Commerce, agricultural associations, Friends of City Parks groups, and a variety of other food and community initiatives. These partnerships may provide funding and infrastructure, business expertise, networking resources, educational toolkits, and/or marketing support (Gantla and Lev, 2015). However, these partnerships can also call into question the compatibility of stakeholder objectives and priorities. Gantla and Lev (2015) noted the characteristic failure of external entities to create sufficient links and relationships with vendors. And in a case study examining a FM undergoing municipally imposed site renovations, Oths and Groves (2012) illustrated the conflicts that can arise from poorly forged relationships between markets and their local governments. In this case, the economic development goals of the city planners overlooked the operational needs of the vendors and the social and cultural goals of the market administrators (Oths and Groves, 2012).

In addition to their affiliation with FMO, fifteen of the forty-one questionnaire respondents linked their FM governing body with an external entity (e.g. BIA, Community Association, Chamber of Commerce, municipality, etc.). And yet when interviewees had the opportunity to expand upon such linkages, fourteen of the seventeen participants mentioned having partnered with one or more external organizations. This indicates that while the majority of the questionnaire respondents did not officially link their governing bodies with external groups, the interview narratives revealed an inclination for FMs to form some degree of community partnership. Partnerships and collaboration have been cited as being essential to FM enhancement and local food system reform in general (Griffin and Frongillo, 2003; Miller and McCole, 2014). But while building supportive relationships with local government and community groups may be critical to FM success, forging these relationships can prove challenging. As seen in the preceding section, a FM's relationship with local government can be precarious and may require considerable negotiation. Because FMs are often one of a number of priorities for municipal administration, and may be considered a relatively low priority, the ability to control their fate comes into question. As the above example illustrated, municipalities can make sudden and substantial changes to the market site without consulting the FM administrators. Changes to parking allowances and permit requirements were also cited as unexpected developments that require the FM community to adapt and accommodate. Parking conflicts appear to be a particularly sticky issue, and in some cases, parking allowances for both vendors and customers can make or break a FM. One manager was facing the threat of a significant hike in parking permit fees, an increase that she felt would doom the market. This same manager told of a neighbouring FM that suffered "a nightmare parking and permit" situation, year after year and surmised that this reflected a lack of respect and support from the city. Another manager felt that the price of parking around her market was a perennial deterrent for customers, and the abovementioned market saw a drop in customer attendance after the city rescinded their free parking arrangement. Meanwhile, another manager felt that her market was thriving because of ample parking, and often heard customers say they preferred her market to a neighbouring one for that reason. Yet another market was considering relocation because they felt that parking was not accommodating enough customers, and to a large degree, parking capacity dictates how much a market can expand and increase their vendor numbers. Not surprisingly, these anecdotes about parking strife came from interviews with urban markets, where relations with city government appeared to be more fraught with tension than with suburban or rural markets.

Another key influence on the administration of FMs is the presence of neighbouring markets. This need not be a competitive relationship, and can instead be more symbiotic, as some of my interview data suggests. In any case, proximate FMs will have an impact on one another's enterprises. Based on the narratives I collected, the existence of nearby FMs can affect customer demand and attendance, vendor availability, and may even influence municipal policy pertaining to FMs. As mentioned above, a city that has witnessed an "explosion of expansion" of FMs in recent years has increased its regulatory policies, including the requirement of special events permits for FMs. One interviewee framed neighbouring markets in terms of competition, expressing concern that vendors could capture greater sales and higher prices at the competing FMs.

Another manager lamented that she was losing customers to a competitor, allegedly a fraudulent enterprise posing as an authentic FM. This inspired her to make the extra effort to highlight their status as a true, producer-based FM. In other cases, it seemed that the presence of nearby markets inspired some governing bodies to clarify their mandates and differentiate their operation in response. This seemed particularly important for one manager who noted some brand confusion arising from the similarity of the name of a competitor, whereby a Google search for her FM would invariably direct people to the other market. Of course, competition is not always the lens through which FMs see their neighbouring markets. Indeed three of my interviewees spoke of planning their market day and hours of operation around the schedules of nearby FMs. This created a symbiotic arrangement in that these markets were not competing for customers during the same timeslot, but also vendors were able to attend all of the markets instead of having to spread their labour and staff resources across several FMs. As well, this accommodates customers whose schedules are compatible with only one of the local FMs. In the above examples, proximate FMs are shown to be an important influence on how a market operates and whether they will thrive.

Summary: Factors Affecting Farmers' Market Governance and Management

Reflecting on the above discussions, it becomes clear that the factors influencing FM decision-making and administrative procedures are complex and interconnected. What emerged from the data was a vast diversity of approaches that were specific to the particulars of the FM location, the people involved, the core philosophy, and the journey of development each market was taking. What was not evident in the data was a clear connection between market governance and management and community type (i.e. rural vs. urban). For instance, community type does not appear to dictate how much decision-making authority is given to vendors, or how much effort is put into documenting market procedures and policies. Nor does it appear to influence a market's community partnership strategies, attitudes toward growth, or resilience to change. Indeed, the only connection between community type and governance that the data appeared to reveal had to do with harmonious (or disharmonious) municipal relations. Based on the abovementioned narratives, FMs operating in urban centres appeared to experience more contentious negotiations with city government groups. In my opinion, these markets would be wise to approach this relationship with extra diplomacy, and to attempt to establish long-term support through official documentation such as memoranda of understanding (MOU).

Much more than community type, the factors that appear to have a significant impact on how FM governance and management are carried out are market size, age, willingness to adapt, and relationships with external organizations. As well, vendor engagement in governance procedures, and formalized documentation of market administration appear to play a significant role in the way markets are run. If any best practices could be gleaned from the above findings, they would include the following:

- FMs ought to dedicate time and effort to documenting and archiving procedural systems, rules and regulations, by-laws, codes of conduct, MOUs, long-term strategic planning, etc. This would provide mutually decreed operating instructions that can be passed along to subsequent generations of management and governance.
- New FMs that prioritize foundational strategies have a better chance of weathering the early, unpredictable years. These strategies could include market research into local demand and community demographics, promotional innovation and online presence, determining staffing and volunteer needs and goals, long-term strategic planning that establishes the market mandate and objectives, and securing long-term municipal support.
- Democratic engagement of vendors in market proceedings is essential, but can become unwieldy once a FM reaches a certain size. FMs that intend to grow beyond thirty or forty vendors should consider formulating a mechanism by which vendors are included in decision-making without having to reach consensus. Regular meetings or private Facebook pages designed to provide a platform for all voices would help address concerns and conflicts as they arise.
- Many FMs appear to be operating in isolation, rather than learning from the trials and triumphs of others. A province-wide or national voluntary

network of FMs aimed at sharing information, challenges, victories, advice and recommendations would be particularly useful to those embarking on new FMs and those struggling to withstand difficulties.

Vendor Relationships

The Research Questions

Many businesses strive to accommodate the needs of customers (hence the expression, 'the customer is always right'). FMs, in serving the needs of their clients (the vendors), often must place these needs on par or even above those of the FM customers. Indeed, without a congenial and satisfied pool of vendors, a FM will suffer and most likely fail. Therefore, determining how FMs can best cultivate and influence relationships with and among vendors is of critical importance. The research questions pertaining to vendors asked:

> *What is the most productive relationship with/among the vendors? What is the relationship, if any, between vendor characteristics, size of market, and type of community?*

The vendor-related interview questions touched on three areas: 1) vendor pool design and recruitment process, 2) vendor turnover (i.e. vendors dropping out of the market and factors influencing this), and 3) vendor motivations (i.e.

what draws vendors to this market and what influences vendor retention). These questions were meant to provide a detailed picture of the relationships between market administrators and vendors, as well as exploring vendor-to-vendor interactions. They also sought to draw out narratives about what works well and what does not in terms of these relationships. In reviewing the vendor-related narratives, I identified five recurrent themes, which are examined below.

Reselling, Local Importation, and the Question of Authenticity

While reselling can be defined in a number of ways and can include a variety of practices, many FMs use this term to refer to a particular practice of vendor misrepresentation (Smithers and Joseph, 2010). Some interviewees describe instances of vendors buying produce from the Ontario Food Terminal (a wholesale market that imports and distributes food from across the globe) and then displaying and reselling it as their own product at FMs across the province. This practice of deception and the prevalence of inauthentic vendors have prompted many market operators to oppose reselling and to outline their rejection of the practice in their mandates and vendor regulations (Smithers and Joseph, 2010). Even the overt presence of resellers can antagonize farmer-vendors and dilute the market's legitimacy, belying the term *farmers'* market (Cummings, Kora and Murray, 1999).

Coupled with their restrictions on reselling, many markets will also prohibit what has been called "local importation" (Smithers, Lamarche and

Joseph, 2008, p. 346), whereby products unavailable in the vicinity are brought in from afar to supplement the local produce. While this practice may not fit a literal definition of reselling, it can involve vendors who are not the primary producers, and it often stretches the conception of 'local'. As such, local importation calls into question the authenticity of a FM, and therefore falls under the umbrella of reselling. In prohibiting these various forms of reselling, markets advocate for local food, local economies, and local community wellbeing (Oths and Groves, 2012).

It is not surprising that the issue of reselling was mentioned in 16 of the 17 interviews I conducted. The sample group was biased by virtue of their membership with FMO. One of the defining criteria for FMO markets is that they comply with the 50% + 1 primary producer rule. As such, maintaining a minimum number of authentic agricultural producers and 'field to fork' farmers in the vendor pool is of considerable importance. Indeed, 8 of the 17 interviewees specifically mentioned the 50% + 1 rule and noted their commitment to maintain and in some cases, tighten this stipulation.

Most of the interview participants discussed the role of authenticity and their stance on reselling when asked about their vendor recruitment practices, vendor and customer motivations, and the market's overall mandate. This issue is not a simple matter of prohibiting the sale of imported products and ensuring the legitimacy of agricultural vendors. In describing how they manage the reselling issue, interviewees revealed a wide range in how reselling is defined and highlighted the need for certain allowances. Several participants, even as they presented their market as strictly producer-only and locally focused, could describe exceptions to the rule that still fit within their mandates. One example included farmers selling their neighbour's produce because the neighbour can't or chooses not to attend the market. While this is a far cry from bogus farmers selling produce from California, it can still mislead customers in that authenticity hinges on the vendor being the primary producer. This seemingly minor detail speaks to the importance of vendors having intimate knowledge of their product in order to facilitate the social connections and educational opportunities that are unique to the FM community.

Another example of rule bending involves vendors supplementing their product list with out-of-season items that customers expect and demand (e.g. tomatoes in June). And a third exception to the 'no reselling' rule involves 'gap-filling' to provide items that aren't being produced locally, either because of hardiness zone limitations, or the absence of local producers currently growing those items. In discussing the finer nuances of reselling, transparency was acknowledged as a requirement to alleviate customer concerns. Allowances were rationalized as attempts to meet customer demand, but were only condoned if customers were made aware of the source of the produce. This can be achieved with clear signage, or in the configuration of stalls whereby primary producers are given preferred placement, or resellers are relegated to a demarcated zone (Smithers and Joseph, 2008).

In a notable exception to the tendency for FMs to bend their own rules, a northern Ontario market representative stated that they firmly adhere to the ‘local, producer-only’ mandate. Arguably, this market has more reason to allow local importation than their more southerly neighbours, as their geography limits growing capacities and some product categories are unavailable. However, this participant insisted that to start making exceptions would compromise the market’s philosophy of advocating for local farmers. In support of this viewpoint, another market manager noted the conflict that arises when making exceptions and the need to defend your decision and reestablish where the line is drawn. This is particularly important during vendor recruitment. She remarked, “…I can only afford one of those anomalies, in a way, or else you get kind of called on it, [with other non-local applicants] saying “But *they’re* not local! Why can’t you have me?” She goes on to assert that offering non-local specialty items draws more customers, which benefits the market as a whole. This exception is made, in other words, for the good of all the vendors. Research conducted by the Greenbelt Farmers’ Market Network acknowledged this delicate balance, noting that markets must strive to “sell primarily items from the vendors’ own farms” (p. 2) while attempting to “earn a bigger share of the food dollar” (p. 2) that might otherwise be spent at the supermarket (Greenbelt Farmers’ Market Network, 2010). Regardless of a FMs stance on reselling and authenticity, it appears that clear communication about the degree and nature of accommodations for non-local products is critical for vendor harmony and customer satisfaction.

Product Balance and Vendor Retention

In designing their vendor pool, FMs must consider the type of shopping experience they are creating, and what variety of products will attract customers, while upholding their objective to support local food producers and entrepreneurs. Once the 50% + 1 rule has been satisfied, markets can then populate their vendor pool with any assortment of product merchants. Typically this includes sellers of baked goods, crafters and artisans, ready-to-eat food vendors, and all manner of value-added food entrepreneurs offering jams, chutneys, spices, teas, pet foods, pickles, etc. Most interviewees described their FMs as being “food-focused” and committed primarily to providing a marketplace for agricultural producers. One manager in particular differentiated her FM from “boutique” markets that tend to draw tourists and shoppers looking to buy specialty items and “treats”. As such, she attempted to limit the number of non-food vendors (i.e. crafters and artisans) and instead, she curated her vendor line-up to draw customers who are “actually coming to buy groceries”. Another manager reiterated the core mandate of her FM stating, “Of course we love our prepared foods and crafters…but we want to make sure there’s space for farmers to make a good living here”. “…they’re farmers’ markets. They’re called that for a reason,” was how another manager put it.

Despite the prioritizing of food and farm products, some interviewees characterized their non-food vendors as imperative for attracting customers. While agricultural goods are the standard fare at FMs, often it is the non-food and prepared food vendors that infuse markets with ‘personality’. Examples of these attractions mentioned in the interview data include a knife-sharpener, a chain-saw carver, a bicycle tune-up specialist, a quilter, and a knitter of alpaca fleece products, among others. These vendors give markets their cultural flavour and can reflect the unique characteristics of the community. However, while many of the non-food vendors were mentioned with fondness and appreciation, one market manager noted that vendors prefer his market to others that are "…selling arts and crafts and strange things like thermos bottles…". He said that these vendors appreciate and prioritize taking part in a market that is food-focused and producer-only.

Product diversity and balance came up repeatedly in the interview data. Most interviewees noted the importance of, and the effort involved in curating a well-designed shopping experience. Often this refers to managing the overlap of products, and imposing a limit to the number of vendors selling the same or similar items. Markets strive to provide enough product variety to attract customers, and enough product exclusivity for vendors to make a decent living. One notable exception, a large urban market, was characterized as being less protectionist than other markets. The manager of this market admitted that this approach has caused some vendor turnover, noting that vendors might leave in search of a market where they can be "the dominant egg producer, or meat producer", but he pointed out that he is committed to encouraging more farming in the area, and supporting new farmers in particular. Some managers highlighted the importance of keeping an open dialogue and negotiating with vendors about overlapping products (i.e. when a competing vendor is being brought on-board). As well, creating a diverse flow to the market stall layout and avoiding placing vendors with similar products adjacent to one another were stated priorities in market curating.

The discussions of vendor pool design also touched on processes of vendor recruitment and retention. As mentioned above, many markets strictly limited non-food and non-agricultural vendors, and those who were allowed had to fit the 'local' mandate as well. However, several markets had a surplus of non-agricultural applicants and had to turn vendors away in order to maintain their 50% + 1 status. Correspondingly, several markets had trouble recruiting agricultural vendors in their region, or they had trouble finding enough producers of the variety of farm goods required to meet demand. This trend may be a function of the recent and ongoing expansion of FMs in Ontario and may indicate market saturation in some regions where available agricultural suppliers are thinly spread across multiple FMs (Cummings, Kora and Murray, 1999). The recruiting difficulties mentioned in my interviews appear to be a more significant issue with small and medium sized markets in rural areas. Most of the urban markets received numerous vendor applications from both agricultural and non-agricultural vendors and some could afford to screen for viable business plans, communication skills, farming practices, etc. Meanwhile, some of the more rural markets said they take any and all applications from farmers if they can fit them in. Overall, the interview narratives revealed how market organizers strive to accommodate customer demand while prioritizing the promotion of vendor livelihoods.

Competition vs. Cooperation

Many of the interviewees highlighted the commitment of their vendors to maintaining a collaborative atmosphere within their market. While capitalist gain and competitive advantage were acknowledged as inevitable aspects of commercial exchange, a common theme throughout the interviews was the desire to create a harmonious team effort at the market. Protectionist vendor recruitment approaches (mentioned above) and rules against undercutting are two of the ways that markets regulate the competitive drives that operate in free markets. This speaks to the fact that aggressive business practices cannot be tolerated as they are in other commercial contexts, as they undermine the collaborative ethos that many FMs uphold as a core principle. One manager in particular mentioned having convinced her agricultural vendors to collaboratively plan their farms in order to reduce product overlap. I suspect this degree of business coordination may be unrealistic in many farming communities, but it represents an ideal to which some FMs could aspire. Indeed, several markets mentioned the need for vendors to occasionally relinquish self-interest and prioritize instead, the good of the market community. Interviewees provided a number of examples of this dynamic. They described vendors who regularly refer customers to other vendors for products of which they have sold out. The tendency for vendors to buy each other's products was noted as evidence of their mutual loyalty, and the vendors at one market were said to be "keen not to just support their own business, but also to support the businesses of everyone else…at the market". Furthermore, two managers highlighted the fact that, while theirs may not be the most profitable FM in the area, their commitment to local food and community fellowship helped them retain a loyal vendor pool.

These are all examples of the way cooperation supersedes competitive drives at many FMs, but it isn't all selflessness and camaraderie. One manager's approach was decidedly laissez faire, saying that "every year somebody whines about somebody else with a friggin' butter tart…Yeah, fight it out, thank you very much!" Another noted that agriculture is "really one of the most politically charged areas of the economy…there's always competitive drive, one way or the other". She went on to say that this drive must be kept in check because "customers pick up on that, if there's infighting". A third manager also cited the political nature of FMs and pointed out that the economic vulnerability of agricultural livelihoods makes vendor competition a "constant challenge".

The friction inherent in reconciling capitalist imperatives with community priorities is possibly one of the most confounding aspects of operating a FM, and finding a solution may be a key to food system transformation (Alkon, 2008; Andreé et al., 2015; Levkoe, 2011). In order to "develop a food system that meets collective social needs", Levkoe (2011, p. 692) calls for a shift from individual consumer transactions toward interactions predicated on social responsibility. Far from being a sentimental ideal, such a shift is evident at many FMs and in the broader alternative food system. In interviews with eighteen Upstate New York farmers, Griffin and Frongillo (2003) found that FM vendor cooperation was highly valued and teamwork was deemed necessary for individual prosperity and enhanced market performance. And Andreé et al.

(2015) observed that many of the alternative food initiatives operating in Eastern Ontario are reforming the food system by prioritizing “caring practices and the acknowledgment of interdependence” (p. 1465). These findings underscore the importance of promoting a collaborative atmosphere among FM vendors.

Social Capital in the Farmers’ Market Community

The emphasis that interviewees placed on building a sense of community at FMs was reflected in the use of phrases like “working together as a team”, “harmonious environment” “friendly atmosphere”, “in it together”, and “happy family”. These are indicative of the social capital that accumulates at FMs with respect to connections made between and among vendors, customers and market administrators (Oths and Groves, 2012). Creating this sense of community appears to have a number of advantages for FMs and their participants: it allows a FM to attract and retain vendors and customers with the promise of long-term relationship-building; it provides an environment conducive to education and conversation around food issues; it allows supply to meet demand directly by way of face-to-face interactions; it builds the reputation of the FM as a friendly and welcoming place; and it provides a social outlet for farmers whose opportunities to socialize are typically few and far between (Cummings, Kora and Murray, 1999; Greenbelt Farmers’ Market Network, 2010).

The notion of FMs playing a role in educating the public about local food systems, agricultural practices, and food production in general came up in the majority of the interviews. Some noted that education is a large part of their mandate, while others cited it as a prime motivator for customers. One manager noticed that customers are “wanting to know a lot more about the process of how an animal is raised, or how produce is grown. They can ask those questions”. This suggests a desire among eaters to regain a degree of control over food choices, and to reestablish a level of trust in the quality, safety, and ethical implications of the food they buy. These sentiments are reflected in the literature discussing food ethics, agricultural sustainability and concerns about the global food system (Brom, 2000; Kloppenburg et al., 2000; O’Hara and Stagl, 2001). Many researchers have noted a concurrent rise in consumer distrust in the food system and desire to connect more directly with their food source. As a result, FM organizers are spotlighting the role of markets in addressing these concerns and demands. In addition to educating consumers about food production, the market administrators I spoke with framed FMs as important sites for raising awareness about the realities of farming, particularly on a small, local scale. Because of the unique opportunity for consumer-producer interaction, FMs allow customers to understand crop seasonality, the challenges of weather, the vagaries of farm livelihoods, and even the effects of climate change on agriculture, thus expanding their knowledge of food systems in general.

The Role of Farmers' Markets in Supporting Farmer Livelihoods

Having acknowledged the importance of community-building and cooperation among the FM participants, the majority of the interviewees cited the opportunity to make a good living as the prime motivator for vendors to participate in their market. Further, several interviewees noted that lack of sales was a major contributor to vendor turnover. Beyond just providing a marketing outlet for local agriculture and other food businesses, FMs play a role in the success or failure of these enterprises (Gillespie et al., 2007). FMs are seen as promotional platforms for entrepreneurs (usually farmers) who have not traditionally had the time or enthusiasm required for self-promotion. If vendors were not doing well, the market administrators actively pursued strategies to address this, such as innovative promotions, cooking demonstrations featuring vendors' products, and exploring season extension techniques to prolong sales. In other words, FM organizers took considerable responsibility for the success of their vendors. Often this appeared to be motivated by the fact that thriving vendors are loyal vendors, and loyalty and consistency among the vendor pool is cited as a key to FM success (Cummings, Kora and Murray, 1999).

Interestingly, the success that a vendor attains does not always bestow reciprocal benefits upon the FM. One manager mentioned two instances whereby vendors outgrew the FM and dropped out as a result of their success. In one case, the farm business was "purchased by a national organization" and their business model no longer meshed with the FM mandate. They agreed amicably to part ways. Another vendor chose to drop out of the market when their product became so popular that neither maintaining their current output, nor scaling up their production seemed viable options. This suggests that FMs are ideal launching pads and incubators for small-scale food businesses, but may not accommodate business expansion beyond a particular size and scope.

Along with narratives describing support and advocacy for vendor livelihoods, I also heard examples of just the opposite. In two cases, interview participants described the consequences of FMs failing to adequately address the needs of local agricultural vendors, causing a mass mutiny of these vendors, who then created their own FMs. The markets that arose did so as a result of demand for a more strictly producer-driven market in those communities. This transfer of vendors was described as having been a contentious process and in one case, created a rift in the consumer population, thus illustrating the aforementioned political nature of FMs and farming communities. These accounts highlight the role that FMs play in providing a supportive and committed outlet for agricultural producers and food entrepreneurs to sustain their livelihoods.

In discussions about the role of FMs as agricultural advocates, numerous managers acknowledged the threats faced by small-scale food producers and the need to raise awareness in this regard. Noting the dual obstacles of legislative barriers and competition from supermarkets, one manager said, “It’s very, very difficult for small farmers. The regulations are ridiculous…you have a limited growing season in Canada and you get people…comparing what there is in the grocery store to what we have and they don’t understand why we don’t have a full selection of vegetables all at the same time". This manager noted that customer expectations shaped by supermarket standards (i.e. product uniformity, non-seasonality, and cosmetic perfection) can jeopardize local producers whose seasonal products bear the imperfections of non-industrially produced foods. Still, this manager admitted that customers are gradually becoming better educated about local, small-scale food production, but that there remains a knowledge-gap that FMs can help close.

Another interviewee suggested that her FM not only provides farmers with a marketing opportunity, but also gives incentive to new and aspiring farmers. She said, "It's one of my favourite things, seeing those young people who got inspired by coming to the markets and they decided they wanted to become farmers, and they're doing it. It's not easy, but it's working…they saw this model where people are being very directly rewarded by coming to the market and having customers absolutely love them". Considering the disquieting shift in Canadian agricultural demographics, the potential for FMs to provide consistent business support and incentive to new farmers is encouraging (Beaulieu, 2011).

Summary: Factors Affecting Farmers' Market Vendor Relationships

The interview data pertaining to vendor dynamics touched on a number of common themes, but as with the governance and management structures, the participating markets each had their own approach and priorities. While reselling was consistently framed as unacceptable, each market navigated the issue slightly differently depending on their geographic location and vendor vacancies. Diplomatic market curating was deemed necessary for both a pleasant shopping experience, and an equitable vendor line-up. Competition was cited as an inevitable aspect of commercial endeavours, but was eclipsed by the emphasis on cooperation. Further to this, most of the participating FMs fostered a familial atmosphere and prioritized strong bonds between and among vendors, customers, and market administrators. And overall, the FMs in this study were committed to providing advocacy and opportunities for small-scale food business people to thrive.

Drawing from these themes, the following recommendations describe some ways to enhance market performance:

- Market regulations must clarify how reselling and local importation are defined. If and when markets allow such practices, clear communication and transparency as to how they are implemented will help mitigate vendor conflicts and prevent misleading customers. Also, delineating a clear definition of ‘local’ would help to clarify this issue and facilitate documenting rules and regulations (Conner et al., 2009; Dukeshire et al., 2015).
- When curating the vendor pool, market administrators need to juggle the financial targets of vendors, the expectations of customers, and the desired atmosphere of the market. This can be facilitated by understanding the extent and nature of local agricultural supply, by

identifying customer demographics (e.g. tourists looking for treats and gifts vs. local grocery-shoppers), and by considering how best to showcase the community's unique culture.

- Vendor relations are central to a smooth running FM. Administrators need to reflect on how cooperation can be made a foundational aspect of the market philosophy. The development of a team ethic does not always occur spontaneously and may need to be deliberately fostered or even mandated.
- Prioritizing educational opportunities at FMs can help advance two objectives: 1) enhancement of social capital by encouraging consumer-producer relationship-building and 2) advocacy for local food producers by raising awareness about the challenges facing farmers and the importance of supporting agricultural livelihoods.

Customer Relationships

The Research Questions

The way that FM administrators navigate relationships with their customer base is of vital importance to the success of the market. Clearly, without customers, there is no need for a FM to exist. But as mentioned above, the customer at a FM may not enjoy the position of primary influence that they hold in other commercial settings. Because of the unique nature of FMs as community enterprises, the role that customers play within the FM community could be characterized in a variety of ways. They could be seen merely as transient consumers of goods and services, or as stakeholders in a type of partnership with the other FM participants. In order to determine how this relationship might best be cultivated, the fourth and final set of research questions asked:

> *What is the most productive relationship with consumers? What is the relationship, if any, between the characteristics of a market's customers, size of market, and type of community?*

In addressing these questions, the interview was designed to determine how FM administrators characterize their customers, their degree of loyalty to the market, and their motivations for shopping at the FM. This line of questioning aimed to draw out narratives about the way interviewees interacted with their customer base, and their opinions about how the customers viewed the FM. Since this study was limited to interviews with market managers and administrators, it was understood that the responses would be coloured by the subjective attitudes of the participants. However, in some cases, these responses were also informed by existing research the participants had conducted at their own FMs. According to my questionnaire data, 71% of the respondents had conducted some degree of formal surveying regarding customer information. This included thirteen of the seventeen interview participants. And while four interviewees reported on the questionnaire that they do not collect customer data, all four reported during the interview that they either currently conduct informal or verbal surveys, or that they plan to survey customers in the future. All of these interviewees acknowledged the importance of gathering such data.

For those questionnaire respondents who indicated that they do conduct some customer surveys, my questionnaire then asked them to indicate what type of data they collected from the following list: customer numbers, demographics, motivations, satisfaction, suggestions, and/or other information. Eight questionnaire respondents indicated that they collect all five types of data, while the other thirty-six indicated that they collect some combination of these. Two of the respondents added to the list, one indicating that they gather customer reviews from Trip Advisor, an online travel website that allows users to rate and comment on their travel experiences; and the other added that they ask customers how they heard about the market. This section of the questionnaire was meant to reveal if and how FM administrators prioritize customer data in running their markets. While it didn’t directly examine customer relationships within the market community, it did suggest that gathering customer data is an important part of establishing and developing a familiarity with the customer base.

The interview narratives delved more deeply into the factors affecting customer behaviour and the role of customers in the market community. These factors fell into four broad themes: 1) community-mindedness and partnership,

2) site location, atmosphere, and hours of operation, 3) market promotions and the role of research and development, and 4) customer motivations and demand. Each of these impacts the way market administrators understand their customers, and how customers are integrated into FM operations.

Community-Mindedness and Partnership

In determining how FM administrators can best characterize relationships with their customers, they can reflect on the role of the customer as a stakeholder (Alkon, 2008; Wilkins, 2005). Are customers merely consumers whose patronage and demand for agricultural goods allow FMs to exist? Or do they represent partners whose support and investment goes beyond the commercial transaction? All of the market managers who took part in the interviews mentioned that they have a loyal following of regular customers. This was often couched in terms of the social capital that FMs tend to foster (Bourdieu, 1986; Oths and Groves, 2012). Interviewees spoke of the fond friendships that develop between customers and vendors, noting that over the years they have gotten to know each other, watched each others' kids grow up, and they regularly ask after the health of husbands, wives and parents. The fact that the same vendors can be counted on to return to the FM year after year, or in the case of year-round markets, that they consistently return week after week, was noted as an important reason for this loyalty. Customers have favourite farmers, or particular products to which they develop a devotion, a phenomenon that one manager acknowledged, saying her patrons are “creatures of habit…they get hooked on farmers and they [say] ‘I like their beets…I will only go to them for their beets’”. Notably, one of the “mutinous” markets mentioned above, described how loyalty has affected them since their vendors, as a group, left the previous market and started their own. She said, “the local population is very polarized on the topic of the market”, noting that, “a very sympathetic buying public who supported what we were doing” had remained loyal after the split. This implies that customers who are free to patronize more than one FM may remain faithful to a market that allows them to express their allegiance to local farmers. Cummings et al. (1999) underscored the extent of customer loyalty when referring to the FM in the possessive: “over ninety percent of Market customers feel that it is important to support local growers at ‘their’ Market” (p. 33).

This loyalty and familiarity was noted as being particularly rewarding for vendors. As previously mentioned, the opportunity for vendors to socialize is a vital part of their FM experience, and interacting with regular customers adds depth to these relationships (Alkon, 2008). Customers also appreciate the chance to socialize amongst themselves at the FM. One manager observed that “a lot of young parents bring their kids and they all kind of hang out together”. Another manager referred to the FM as not just a marketplace, but a “gathering place”, and a third manager commented that “FMs aren’t just about shopping, right?…it’s a community”. These observations create a picture of FMs as being distinct from other shopping experiences, particularly supermarkets, where maximum profits and increased efficiency are prioritized, and social interactions are not. The relatively recent advent of the 'self-checkout' has removed the need to interact with anyone at all at a supermarket. Indeed, failure to interact with customers was noted by one manager as having caused vendors' sales to decline. This interviewee referred to these vendors saying, "When you're not there and you've just hired a stall-sitter, you wouldn't believe the difference in sales". Because her market was tracking vendor revenue from week to week, she was able to observe changes in sales when the farmers were not available to interact with customers. Further, she noted that when stall-sitters failed to engage, and were found to be "just sitting or on their cell phone", sales for that vendor dropped substantially. This example suggests that social interaction is at least as important to customers as the availability of a quality product.

In one unique illustration of the partnership ethic that some FMs engender, an interviewee described ways in which customers were encouraged to become vendors themselves. For this market, being located in northern Ontario created some challenges to the agricultural community. Therefore the manager felt it was important to encourage community members not just to shop at the market and support local farmers, but also to contribute to the local food system themselves by growing and selling whatever they could. She felt this contributed to the broader community, saying that "our focus is really to encourage local agriculture, so if we can encourage someone who has a little bit of extra carrots…in their garden to just come out even for one week, then it helps to show people that we have this ability here". By inviting community members and customers to consider themselves capable of being producers and vendors, this manager suggested that support for local food production would be enhanced. I suspect that this progressive approach would only be feasible at markets where agricultural vendors are in short supply and stall space is abundant. However rare it may be, this example shows how customers can be viewed not as transient and anonymous consumers, but as partners in sustaining a thriving FM (Wilkins, 2005).

Another way that customers are encouraged to invest more than just their grocery budget at the FM is by way of volunteering. As shown in the above discussion on governance and management, FMs rely heavily on the efforts of volunteers, in terms of both serving on governance and management bodies, and also assisting with the day-to-day operations. Indeed, many FMs are initiated through the volunteer efforts of community members who see a need for such an enterprise, and put in the time and energy to make it happen. While my interview questions did not touch specifically on volunteerism, several interviewees mentioned the work of volunteers, and sometimes noted the need or desire for even more volunteer assistance. My own experience as manager of the HCFMA markets revealed to me the indispensible nature of volunteer outreach for successful FM operations. At these markets, community volunteers coordinated the often chaotic parking lot, helped customers to their cars with heavy groceries, helped vendors set up and take down their tents and product displays, and kept an accurate count of market visitors (a much more challenging task than it sounds). After only one week on the job, I became convinced that the markets could not function without these dedicated community members. Based on this observation, I believe that FMs ought to prioritize volunteer recruitment and appreciation programs in order to enhance their operations.

The above examples show how customers become personally invested in their local FMs, and this investment is further cemented at markets that involve their customers in market governance. Five of the seventeen interviewees noted that community members hold one or more positions within their governing bodies, and two others reported that they consult with customers when decisions about market operations are being made. At the HCFMA markets this past summer, customers were surveyed with regard to a potential site relocation in order to get a sense of their reactions. While these customers were not asked to suggest possible sites, their willingness to follow the market to a new site was a crucial part of the decision-making process. And although it is not reasonable to expect to easily or thoroughly include customers in the running of a FM, it does seem reasonable to acknowledge their investment in the way the market operates and take this into account.

Site Location, Market Atmosphere and Hours of Operation

FM location and site characteristics, as well as hours of operation, were mentioned in each of the interviews as having an effect on customer demographics and behaviour. Similarly, most of the people I spoke with acknowledged the importance of developing a particular shopping experience and atmosphere at their market in order to retain customers. In terms of location, interviewees noted how the presence or lack of certain conveniences, amenities, visibility and accessibility all affected customer relations. Several managers highlighted the convenience of their markets being located in 'walkable' communities, along trails and bike paths, close to bus terminals, or adjacent to other shopping venues that help draw both locals and tourists. Interestingly, being close to other shopping opportunities wasn't always framed as an advantage. One manager of a large urban market described being in a location that had recently become a bustling commercial hub with lots of customer traffic. He felt that this shift had played a part in attracting tourists, but he noted the concurrent loss of a significant number of local customers and regulars. Similarly, two other urban market managers preferred being off the beaten (and touristy) path, preferring to attract more neighbours and community members. However, one of these managers acknowledged the advantages of having several restaurants nearby, as their chefs tended to become regular customers, frequenting the market to boost the amount of local fare on their menus. These managers all seemed to prioritize establishing a loyal base of frequent return customers more highly than attracting the transient tourist shoppers.

Some of the participating markets were situated in more isolated locations, and several interviewees noted the need to provide customers with incentives and amenities to encourage them to linger. Some mentioned the convenience of having washrooms, garbage cans, and picnic tables available for the comfort of customers. More importantly, ample parking and ready-to-eat food vendors were cited as particularly essential for attracting customers and motivating them to stay longer and shop more. These two issues were raised by one manager who observed, "When you don't have that balance [of food-to-go vendors], and you don't have a reason for people to pause for a few minutes and sit at the picnic table, we don't think that people stay as long and we don't think they shop as much." She went on to point out that many of her customers "had quit going to [another local market] a long time ago because there was never any parking and it wasn't convenient". These people were now loyal customers at her market, in part due to the accessibility and convenience of parking. According to Cummings et al. (1999), market amenities represent an area requiring attention and improvement. Their study, which surveyed customers at 127 FMs across Ontario, found that "only 42% of respondents are very satisfied with existing facilities such as parking, washrooms and seating areas" (Cummings, Kora and Murray, 1999, p. 43). Fourteen years later, this remained an issue that some markets struggle to address. In 2012, the Greenbelt Farmers' Market Network found that insufficient access to amenities like parking, seating, and other conveniences were areas of concern among the customers they surveyed (Greenbelt Farmers' Market Network, 2012).

Site visibility plays a role in a market's capacity to attract customers as well. A market that had recently relocated was doing well now that they were in a "prime location", whereas, the previous incarnation had struggled due to a lack of drive-by traffic. Two of the interviewees noted that the vendors' canopies increased the visibility of the FM, one observing, "that's kind of attractive too, 'cause you notice it on the highway, those little tent-tops…I think it might just slow down some cars." Being situated near busy intersections or visible from main thoroughfares seems to be an important way for some markets to increase their customer base. While the regular and loyal customers are vital to the market's sustainability, the potential for new customers to stumble upon the FM helps with market growth. One of the FMs in the study relies heavily on their strong base of regular customers, as their site is tucked in behind buildings, and is not visible from the main street. The manager of this market hopes to increase the visibility with streetscape improvements and increased signage and in turn, hopes to improve the likelihood of new customers finding their way to the market.

Several interview participants spoke about market atmosphere and efforts to create a pleasant shopping experience. This went beyond just curating a well-rounded vendor line-up to provide a diversity of products. It also entailed things like entertainment, product demonstrations, themed market days, and family-friendly events. Many of the FMs have musicians, a feature that one manager believes keeps people on site longer. Another manager mentioned a local clown who comes to market to make balloon animals for the kids, and a third manager described special events on Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Halloween. All of which indicates the importance of providing customers with more than just a place to do their grocery shopping. As one manager put it, “There’s culture to it…lots of culture involved”. These additional elements give each FM a unique character, which may play a role in fostering loyalty among customers.

Customer attendance and demographics appear to be affected by the hours and day(s) of the week that a FM chooses to operate. When interviewees were asked to characterize their customer base, most of them described roughly two distinct groups that tend to have different shopping habits. Seniors and retirees were mentioned by five of the participants. This demographic was usually said to prefer to shop early in the day, even before the market officially opens, as one manager noted. Another manager, whose market operates Wednesday and Saturday mornings saw more seniors mid-week, whereas a third market, operating on Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings attracted more seniors on Saturday. This suggests that seniors tend to prefer early morning markets that operate mid-week, however customer surveys could help to confirm this impression. The second demographic most often mentioned in the interviews was “young families”. These shoppers were usually observed to arrive at the market later than seniors, because as one manager put it, “it takes [families] longer to get everyone fed and out the door”. As well, it appeared that this demographic preferred a Saturday market to a mid-week one.

Other groups of customers described in the interviews included cottagers, who were said to enjoy the Thursday evening time-slot of their local FM, as it was “really convenient for them to maybe get some treats, get some things for the BBQ, get a bit of produce” in preparation for their weekend at the cottage;

“foodies” or young food enthusiasts, who were said to arrive later and stay until closing time; students, whose attendance spiked in the fall at a FM located close to a college; and chefs, who were reported to appreciate their mid-week FM since weekend markets weren’t convenient for them.

Planning a market’s hours of operation requires a significant amount of deliberation and prior research into traffic patterns, community demographics, and the targeted customer base. One of the newer participating markets was operating on a Sunday, an unusual market day, but one that had undergone a great deal of discussion and consideration. The manager described the process of considering different options and determining which customer demographic would be captured at which times. After consulting with a local farmer, they settled on Sunday, as this would avoid competing with any Saturday markets operating nearby, and a Friday afternoon market, as was originally put forth, might be difficult for vendors whose big market day is Saturday. A late morning market on Sunday was deemed best for their region as it would give people a second weekend market to visit, and because it was slightly later, it would afford both vendors and customers a leisurely morning or the opportunity to attend church. These examples highlight the need for FM administrators to consider a wide variety of factors that will affect their customer attendance and demographics.

Market Promotions and the Role of Research and Development

Promotion of the FM is a crucial part of a market's success. While FMs themselves are platforms for vendors to promote their business and gain exposure to large numbers of new and established customers, FM administrators must also consider ways to promote the market as a whole. Part of this process involves identifying your target customers when designing promotional strategies. Many participants described efforts to draw in new patrons, attract tourists, and retain their current base of regular shoppers. One interviewee appreciated the fact that local food has become quite trendy of late, and she felt that this draws more and more customers to the FM. Meanwhile, another manager appeared to be less interested in appealing to the trendiness, and instead maintained that her market was simply a means for local farmers to sell their product. She insisted, "we're not trendy…it's not about flash and fanfare". This manager seemed content to let the market promote itself, as she had little time for extensive advertising. However, many of the interviewees outlined a variety of strategies that they were implementing in order to increase their market's public exposure. These managers mentioned posters that could be displayed in local businesses; postcards with market details (hours, websites, social media links) that vendors could distribute at their discretion; highway signage and colourful flags to catch the eye of passersby; and radio spots reminding listeners to visit and highlighting vendors and their products to provide weekly enticement.

Social media was mentioned several times as an important way to promote the markets, though none of the interviewees elaborated on its efficacy. From my own experience using social media to promote the HCFMA, it has a number of advantages over more labour intensive and expensive promotions like flyers, posters and newspaper ads. Facebook (FB) pages in particular allow administrators to post photographs of their market and its products, link to vendors' FB pages, notify customers about special events, introduce guest vendors, promote buskers, and provide other weekly updates and up-to-the-minute announcements. FB also allows customers to provide feedback and 'like' posts. As well, the site is designed to provide metrics indicating how many people any particular post reaches, and how the FB page is performing in general. FM administrators can use these statistics to improve their marketing strategies. This is particularly useful for ongoing promotions, as one manager pointed out that her challenge is "getting the word out and keeping it out there. You can't do a one-time thing. It has to be constant over the whole season".

According to several interview narratives, some promotional efforts were allocated to acknowledging and rewarding regular customers, including customer appreciation days. One manager decided to focus in particular on their devoted year-round customers through a winter loyalty card program, whereby a minimum purchase made at each visit over the winter months entitled cardholders to a stamp. Once the customer had collected ten stamps, they received a gift of ten "market dollars", some free produce, and an entry in a prize draw. In running this program, the market administrators had the "chance to really talk with the regulars…and reward them and get a sense of how much they cared about the market", while also helping to retain these customers through the lean winter months.

While advertising and promotions were prioritized by most of the participants as effective strategies for prosperity and growth, such efforts were not always guaranteed to succeed. One market, despite being located in a busy urban centre, continually struggled to attract sufficient customers and the manager felt she had exhausted her promotional ideas. She described the various programming she had incorporated to boost attendance, including cooking classes with local chefs and an annual market calendar featuring recipes and promoting local food. Yet despite these creative efforts, she was becoming frustrated with what she felt was a serious shortage of shoppers. "What's next?" she asked, "Are we going to have Cirque Du Soleil out there?" Even more frustrating was the fact that she had provided a suggestion box the previous year in order to learn what might be missing, and she found that "most of the suggestions were things we were already doing". This manager decided that in the coming season, she would begin analyzing her customer base and conducting some formal surveys to help increase her clientele.

Knowing who is and who is not coming to the FM affects the way a market is promoted, and the abovementioned customer surveys can help administrators focus their advertising efforts in a particular direction. The following strategies are based on my experience with the HCFMA and my observations of how they have used market research to enhance their operations. Customer surveys can help determine where patrons travel from, how they learned about the market, how often they tend to visit, what types of products they are looking for, and which products they feel are missing. As well, surveys can allow customers to rate details of the market, such as timing, location, parking, accessibility and amenities. After collecting such data, market administrators can respond in a number of ways: on one hand, they can provide more of what customers rated highly and improve upon those aspects customers deemed unsatisfactory. On the other hand, administrators can expand their efforts to reach people who don't currently shop at their market. For example, if most of the regular customers heard about the market through a FB page, administrators might want to increase their radio and newspaper advertising to reach those who do not access social media. Similarly, if most customers report driving in from the east, then administrators might consider increasing the signage along the highway approaching from the west. Gathering customer data can significantly enhance a market administrator's ability to refine their promotional activities.

Customer data can also help track changes that result from major adjustments like site relocation, a shift in operating hours, or the addition of a second or third market day. One market that had undergone a disruptive relocation process and the addition of a new market site had also undergone an apparent shift in customer demographics. The manager remarked, "I definitely want to see if we can quantify that sort of suspicion I have" that the loss of customers from the disruption might have resulted in disgruntled shoppers having shifted their loyalty to the new site. And surveying customers in advance of such significant changes can help a market anticipate disruption to customer attendance. As described above, the HCFMA surveyed customers in advance of a possible site relocation to determine if customers were likely to follow the market, or if they would limit their shopping to one of the other locations. Similarly, data collected in the summer of 2014 provided the HCFMA with the information they required to make an informed decision about opening their third market in Minden on Saturday mornings (Martin, 2014). Customers had been asked to identify their preferred location and timing and this information gave the market board confidence in their decision. Research and development strategies can provide solid, measurable evidence of customer preferences and behaviours, which can in turn inform market performance and prosperity. Therefore, I believe FM administrators would benefit from incorporating some form of data collection or customer surveying in their yearly plans. This recommendation is supported by the findings of the Greenbelt Farmers' Market Network (2010). Their report identified a number of advantages to customer surveys, including the capacity to document market strengths and weaknesses, rate customer satisfaction, and help vendors adapt to customer demands and expectations (Greenbelt Farmers' Market Network, 2010).

Customer Motivation and Demand

Once a market's administrative body understands their customers' motivations and specific demands, they can more effectively incorporate this information into how they operate. When asked about their customers' motivations for shopping at their FM, the administrators I spoke to gave a wide variety of answers, but a few recurring responses arose as well. Several interviewees noted their customers' desire for fresh, healthy and high quality food. They also felt that market attendees prioritized local food and support for local producers and, related to this, they believed customers valued the ability to connect directly with food producers. These motivations appear to support demand for FMs in general, as freshness, localness and producer/consumer interactions are all fundamental to what distinguishes FMs from supermarkets. Statements about healthiness and food quality appear to be loosely related to the way the food was produced or raised, though clear definitions of 'healthy' remained tacit. One manager believes her customers "see the health benefits of eating sustainably", while another said, "it must be the quality…that brings them because they can certainly go and buy it in the grocery store for the same price or less". The Greenbelt Farmers' Market Network attempted to assess the health benefits of shopping at FMs in their survey of 386 FM customers (2012). Respondents reported consuming higher quantities of fruits and vegetables and fewer processed foods than when they shop at the supermarket, and they noted an increase in culinary knowledge and skills (Greenbelt Farmers' Market Network, 2012). While the promise of healthy foods was said to draw customers to the markets in my study, the opportunity to connect and interact with the food producers was also cited as a major attraction.

Responses relating to this connection centred on increasing knowledge about food production, and regaining trust in one's food source. FMs are framed as places where customers can develop their food literacy. In other words, "your FM is the best place to go to get an education on your food, because that's where you can talk to the people who are actually producing it", as one manager stated. Another interviewee observed that, "people are understanding the importance of local and actually knowing where your food comes from, rather than shopping at a giant corporation". This implies a lack of trust in the corporate food industry, a notion that another manager reiterated: "People are really understanding that you can't trust everything that you're eating". And knowing where their food comes from "gives [customers] an additional sense of security", as another manager noted. She went on to say "the education piece is huge for us…we're always trying to help people learn a little bit more". This emphasis on providing education and expanding consumers' knowledge of food production was a persistent theme through most of the interviews, a trend that supports the findings of other FM and local food systems research (Bingen, Sage and Sirieix, 2011; Griffin and Frongillo, 2003; Levkoe, 2011; Smithers, Lamarche and Joseph, 2008). In particular, the farmers in Griffin and Frongillo's (2003) study emphasized the importance of FMs providing the opportunity for farmers to educate the public with regard to their lives and livelihoods.

The ability to respond directly to specific customer demands was cited as being particularly important as well. One FM had opened a second location and had initiated a winter market, both in response to customer feedback. The manager was also making an effort to address more specific requests by recruiting a producer of heirloom tomatoes and peppers, maintaining a variety of vendors selling value-added products, and providing extras like recipes and cooking tips. She noticed that these are the types of things customers were asking for. Another interviewee said, "We really try to…get our producers to work with our consumers so that we're growing and producing what they want". She provided the example of kohlrabi, a vegetable that was unfamiliar to the local producers, but one farmer had decided to grow it in response to specific requests. While some interviewees recognized that customer requests sometimes reflect short-term food fads (such as the relatively short-lived cupcake and raw food crazes of recent years), one manager noted that demand for gluten-free products has endured, and she expressed pride that her market has been a consistent source for customers who rely on these specialty items. Attempting to respond to the needs of customers, however, can sometimes come into conflict with the mandate of the FM. One manager outlined this dilemma when he observed that customers love being able to buy most of the ingredients they need to make dinner, but they still have to go to the supermarket to buy lemons. "If we were selling lemons, limes and bananas, that would be filling a customer want category", he said. This again, raises the question of reselling and whether a FM should adjust their policies to accommodate the expectations of customers. The challenge is finding the compromise between protecting local farmer livelihoods, and capturing an increasing portion of consumers' food dollar (Greenbelt Farmers' Market Network, 2010). While these decisions are made at the discretion of the market administrative body, the process could be facilitated by developing surveys to determine how strongly the community feels about having a FM that provides these non-local items.

Summary: Factors Affecting Farmers' Market Customer Relationships

Developing and maintaining good customer relations is absolutely vital to running a successful FM. Based on the interview narratives, it follows that approaching customers as highly invested stakeholders is advantageous and can help build customer loyalty. The following list outlines some aspects of this relationship that FM administrators may want to bear in mind:

- While some markets rely on tourists and other transient customers, most administrators want to foster and preserve connections with their regular customers. This provides income security for the vendors and the market as a whole, but it also stimulates the non-monetary transactions that take place, namely the development of social capital.
- In discussions of FM location, hours, and atmosphere, it seems that convenience, visibility, and accessibility are all prioritized, as well as having incentives for customers to want to linger and socialize.

- Promotions are critical to increasing a FM's visibility and markets need to consider whom their advertising is designed to reach. Further to this, research into customer demographics and behaviours can provide valuable information to help markets refine their promotional efforts and allow them to respond more effectively to specific demands.
- Education about food production and interactions with food producers appear to be highly prioritized among many market-goers, and FM administrators should consider ways to promote these.

Chapter 6: Integration and Relevance

Relevance to the Literature and the Research Problem

My thesis research examined a range of FM operational strategies and the effect of various community characteristics on FM organization. The goal, beyond simply shedding light on this diversity, was to identify best practices according to market size and circumstances. These investigations have value for the broader FM community by helping them foster efficient and prosperous markets. But helping FMs thrive also addresses a larger goal: supporting and advancing the viability of local food systems in response to an increasingly unhealthy, unethical and dominant global food system.

In recent decades, an alternative food movement has arisen in response to the globalization trend (Lyson, 2004). At the core of this movement is a widespread effort to strengthen the capacity of communities to establish and control their own local food systems (Levkoe, 2011). In doing so, proponents of this movement hope to transition away from food production and distribution structures that prioritize overall profits and efficiency (i.e. the fastest growing and cheapest food), at the expense of environmental, social and animal welfare. Accordingly, the goal is to create sustainable food systems that protect and cultivate the health of individuals, communities, their livelihoods, and the planet. Alongside the research examining alternative food initiatives, there is considerable criticism of the local food movement. The critiques point out some false assumptions about local food's environmental footprint, the failure of the movement to sufficiently address food insecurity and unequal access to high quality food, and the tendency for this movement to further entrench the status quo rather than contributing to food system transformation (Dupuis and Goodman, 2005; Guthman, 2008b; Schnell, 2013; Werkheiser and Noll, 2014; Winter, 2003). This last critique refers to the application of "market-based responses to environmental and social problems" (Andreé et al., 2015, p. 1452), casting citizens as consumers whose power lies primarily in how they spend their money (DeLind, 2011).

In the following section, I revisit some of the associations between FMs and sustainable food systems as they are defined in the literature, and I demonstrate how my data support or dispute these associations. As well, I consider the ways in which critical analyses of the local food movement are reflected in my findings.

Famers' Markets and Ecological Sustainability

The environmental benefits of local food systems are both celebrated and contested in the literature. In Chapter 3, I observed that discussions of the environmental benefits of local food systems often emphasize the reduction of 'food miles' and the subsequent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from shortened distribution chains (Bentley and Barker, 2005; Blay-Palmer, 2008; Elton, 2010; Smith and MacKinnon, 2007). Several studies dispute these statements, pointing out the relative inefficiency of transporting small quantities of local food to local markets, and noting that food transport accounts for an insignificant quantity of emissions as compared to those generated during food production (Mariola, 2008; Schnell, 2013; Wallgren, 2006; Weber and Matthews, 2008). While some of the research participants I spoke with associated their FM with the '100 mile diet' (Smith and MacKinnon, 2007) and a reduction in food transport, these points were not cited as primary motivators for either vendors or customers. Rather, environmental objectives emerged as interviewees spoke about favouring vendors who use sustainable production practices. FM administrators sometimes required vendors to adhere to sustainability mandates, or even limited their vendor pool primarily to certified organic producers. These directives were often stated in the market rules and constitutions, but they also reflected the desires of the customers. Interviewees noted widespread customer demand for organic or otherwise sustainably raised and grown foods. Customers also valued the opportunity to ask vendors about their production practices. Occasionally this was said to be motivated by mere curiosity about food production, but more often it was driven by the desire to ensure that animals had been treated well, and plants had not been sprayed with chemicals. Even in the absence of clearly stated regulations, market customers provided incentive for producers to adopt more sustainable practices. This finding corresponds to research conducted at FMs in Maine, which concluded that customer demand had a significant influence on vendors, encouraging environmentally beneficial practices (Hunt, 2007). This trend is further supported by research done by the Greenbelt Farmers' Market Network in 2010. The subsequent report found that FM customers in the Greenbelt sought out "organic and natural/low pesticide food…inspiring the majority of vendors to adapt their farm operations" (Greenbelt Farmers' Market Network, 2010, p. 1).

Local food and FMs further contribute to environmental sustainability in their capacity to champion small-scale food production, which is in turn, associated with natural resource conservation, ecosystem diversity, and land stewardship (da Silva, 2014). While farm size itself does not necessitate the use of sustainable practices, it is likely that smallholders use such practices in order to reduce energy costs, reduce runoff and conserve on-farm resources. Indeed, when producing food at a small scale, sustainable practices tend to be more economically prudent (Altieri, 2009). The data I collected provided ample evidence, also reflected in the Greenbelt report, that FMs in Ontario are providing a much-needed marketing outlet and business incubation opportunity for both new, small-scale farmers and established producers looking to test new products (Gillespie et al., 2007; Greenbelt Farmers' Market Network, 2010). FMs are accessible and affordable for small, independent food producers and entrepreneurs, whereas mainstream commodity markets tend to be accessible only to producers working on an industrial scale (Gillespie et. al., 2007). Ensuring that small-scale agriculture remains viable means that sustainable agricultural practices remain profitable.

Further, providing the opportunity for smallholders to make a living allows numerous small parcels of arable land to remain in production rather than being abandoned or contributing to urban sprawl and/or other industrial developments

(Brown, 2002; Feagan, Morris and Krug, 2004; Francis et al., 2012). The unchecked paving over of agricultural lands, particularly those adjacent to urban centres, overlooks the food productive potential of such land and its capacity to sequester carbon and mitigate climate change (Francis et al., 2012; Ohlson, 2014). The FMs in highly urbanized regions like Toronto and Ottawa provide economic opportunities for small-scale farmers growing in the protected Greenbelt areas. And in regions with agricultural challenges due to shortened growing seasons and poor soils, the small pockets of productive land in these areas can still provide an income for small-scale farmers, as was confirmed by my interview participants.

Finally, studies have demonstrated the ecological benefits of preserving genetic diversity in livestock production, and designing highly diversified crop farms (Björkland et al., 2009; Gillespie et al., 2007; Goland and Bauer, 2004). Many of the narratives that emerged in my interviews revealed the capacity for FMs to promote such biodiversity. Several interviewees revealed that each vendor usually sold an impressive variety of products and often they were products not commonly sold in supermarkets. These included heirloom varieties of fruits and vegetables that don’t have the durability or shelf life required for commercial production, but that are in high demand for their superior flavour and unusual appearance. As well, heritage breeds of livestock and unusual species like elk were mentioned as being popular among FM customers. Production of these breeds tends to be done on a small-scale, using more sustainable and humane rearing practices (Appleby, 2005; Gwin, 2009; Hendrickson and James, 2005; Long, 2009), and FMs provide a vital outlet for such food production and sale.

Analyses and critiques of local food systems have typically focused on ‘food miles’ and their environmental ramifications. However, it appears that the true potential for local food systems and FMs to protect the planet is through their advocacy for small-scale agriculture, sustainable farming practices, and the ecological viability of local farming communities.

Farmers’ Markets and Economic Sustainability

The global food system tends to favour efficiencies of scale and regulatory and policy landscapes are geared towards large-scale, industrial food producers (Andrée et al., 2015). As a result, small-scale, independent enterprises are all but shut out of commercial supply chains and they often struggle against prohibitive regulatory frameworks (Hauter, 2012). As such, these producers depend on alternative marketing streams to maintain their livelihoods (Lyson, 2004). FMs play a crucial role in providing economic security to these folks, thus sustaining the viability of the local food system. This was borne out in the conversations I had with FM managers and administrators. Many of the interviewees spoke at length about the economic benefits of their FM in the broader community. This was particularly true of the markets that were associated with external organizations like Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) or Community Futures groups. These types of organizations are primarily driven by economic development goals, and their involvement indicates recognition that FMs can stimulate the local economy (Gantla and Lev, 2015).

The link between FMs and economic security for vendors came up several times throughout my interviews. Interviewees cited profit potential as the primary motivator for vendors to participate in the FM. These observations are further supported by research conducted by the Greenbelt Farmers Market Network (2015), which found that most of the vendors they surveyed had seen their farm business incomes stabilize or increase between 2009 and 2014. These farmers attributed the growth in their earnings to increased customer demand, an expansion of their own product offerings, and significantly, an improvement in how FMs were operating. In particular, they noted improvements in promotions, infrastructure and location (Greenbelt Farmers Market Network, 2015). Since FMs contribute significantly to the stability of farmer income, their success and prosperity are closely linked to broader issues of community economic sustainability.

Some research highlights the value of FMs as agri-tourism stimulators (Brown, 2002; Farmers' Markets Ontario, 2011; Hinrichs, 2000; Hodgins, 2014; Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance, 2015; Pike Place…, 2004). Correspondingly, many of my interviewees recognized the potential for their FM to attract tourist dollars to their community. FMs were characterized as 'destinations' and promoted as places to taste the local flavours and cultural attractions of the region. As well, some interviewees claimed that their vendor pools were designed to provide not just groceries for the local population, but gifts and treats that would be more appealing to visitors than to regular weekly shoppers. Still, the majority of the managers I spoke to characterized tourists and visitors as their secondary customer base. The desire to attract and cater to tourists was framed as a means to grow the market, but was not the primary objective. Further, attracting tourists seemed to be a particularly low priority at the urban markets, whose managers spoke of a desire to focus on their regular clientele and shape their FMs to the needs of the local communities. This suggests that the participating FMs aim to function more as community-builders than as economic drivers.

Farmers' Markets and Social Sustainability

The above distinction appears to contradict some of the research suggesting that FMs cater to affluent consumers and fail to address the needs of all community members (Werkheiser and Noll, 2014; Guthman, 2008a). Indeed, some literature suggests that local food and FMs are in danger of being increasingly associated with elitism and "yuppie chow" (Feagan, Morris and Krug, 2004, p. 250; Guthman, 2003, p. 431) as they exploit the "locavore" trend (Schnell, 2013, p. 615) and appeal to "the whims and appetites of a leisure class" (Oths and Groves, 2012). As well as being associated with privilege, FMs are also linked to racial homogeneity among customers (Alkon and McCullen, 2011; Guthman, 2008a). Certainly, FMs are not known for being accessible to, or frequented by, low-income earners or marginalized communities, and affordability tends to be low on the list of customer motivations, thus implying a luxury of choice among FM shoppers (Feagan, Morris and Krug, 2004; Holloway and Kneafsey, 2000; Hunt, 2007). Of course market operators need not strive to be the vanguard of social justice; still, as part of a larger alternative food movement that seeks to raise awareness about local food systems, it seems reasonable that these community-building organizations would want to promote equal access to healthy, local food.

These issues of privilege and race were not addressed in my interviews. However, the affordability and prices of FM products did come up: one interviewee noted that customers were drawn to his FM for the quality of the food, not the prices, as they could certainly find more affordable food at the supermarket. And a second interviewee noted that they would like to have more certified organic vendors but that the economic status of the customers limits the number of organic producers the market can support. In discussions of customer demographics, race and economic status were not mentioned. While the issues of accessibility and inclusivity were not focal points of my investigation, the evidence suggesting that FMs are relatively exclusive sites where privileged populations can exercise their food politics deserves further exploration. If FMs are to advance awareness about and access to local food, they may wish to examine ways in which they can contribute to greater food security and inclusivity for all community members. Granted, not a simple task, but worth consideration.

Promotion of community food security was not part of the market mandates that I studied. Instead, my data reveals that FMs prioritize economic support for one segment of society, namely small-scale farmers, a demographic that tends to have the highest rates of food insecurity in the world (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2016; von Grebmer et al., 2012). Alongside this goal, FMs seek to enhance overall community wellbeing and cohesion. These dual objectives were reflected in my interview narratives, and they echo the conclusions of authors responding to the critiques of local food initiatives. My analysis of the FMs in my study aligned with what Werkheiser and Noll (2014) call a "community-focused sub-movement" (p. 201) of the broader local food movement. This sub-movement, "which sees people as members of communities, food as being co-constituted with those communities, and locality as a necessary part of building more just communities and inter-community relationships" (p. 209), is also framed as having the most "radical potential" (p. 209) to reform the current food system (Werkheiser and Noll, 2014). This sub-movement acknowledges that food has cultural and regional meaning beyond its role as a commodity, and in this sense, "co-constituting" food refers to the community members collectively defining what food means to them. The tendency to build FMs around a foundation of community development prevents them from simply reinforcing purely economic forces and privileging the affluent (Andreé, Ballamingie and Sinclair-Waters, 2015; Schnell, 2013; Werkheiser and Noll, 2014).

Community cohesion and civic welfare are recognized as being under threat from the tendency of the global food system to disconnect production from consumption (Kneafsey, 2010; Turner and Hope, 2014). This plays out in the dwindling knowledge about and involvement in the production of food, and also in the way food is increasingly disconnected from social and cultural interactions (Hendrickson and Heffernan, 2002). FMs counteract these trends, in the sense that they are seen not simply as sites of economic exchange, but as places to learn about food, get to know local farmers and food producers, and meet friends and neighbours (Betz and Farmer, 2016). The global food system thrives on the disconnection between eaters and the industrial processes that occur between farm and fork. Indeed it depends on consumers maintaining cognitive distance from these processes (Hoogland, de Boer, and Boersema, 2005; Graça, Calheiros, and Oliveira, 2014). In contrast, FMs are recognized for their capacity to educate the public about food production, the realities of farming, and the effects of supporting a local food system (Griffin and Frongillo, 2003; Hunt, 2007). My data revealed a predominance of customers motivated to make social connections with their local food producers, and to increase their food literacy (Vidgen and Gallegos, 2014). The majority of my research participants acknowledged the social capital that FMs help to foster as a significant motivation for both vendors and customers, as part of their mandate, and in several cases, as the market's greatest strength.

Despite the fact that FMs are entrenched in a capitalist system where vendors face competitive tensions, overwhelmingly, the people I spoke with ranked the social benefits of the FM experience as being at least as important as the sale and purchase of goods. This is one of the key features that distinguish FMs from supermarkets, where food literacy, social interactions, and ethical consumption are devalued and where price and convenience reign. Instead, FMs fall in line with the notion of “community capitalism” outlined by Lyson and Green (1999, p. 138) and the “morally embedded economies” that Alkon (2008, p. 491) discussed. These authors highlight the importance of (and the increasing desire for) opportunities for community members to engage with and learn about their food system. This takes the form of greater agency over how the local food system works, greater knowledge about its players and processes, and greater choice in the quality and safety of the foods purchased and consumed.

Summary: Sustainability Goals of Farmers’ Markets

The contributions that local food and FMs make to the sustainability of the food system have been thoroughly discussed in the literature. While the claims that these alternatives are superior to globalized food production and distribution have been widely critiqued, evidence suggests that FMs can help reduce a community’s reliance on a destructive food system that exploits farmers, harms the environment, and undermines the health of consumers. My conversations with FM managers and administrators focused mainly on the specific operations and decision-making structures of the markets. However, these broader issues of sustainability often formed the foundation upon which FM mandates were conceived. Sustainability goals of the participating markets took the following forms:

- the desire to increase the availability of organic or otherwise sustainably produced food
- the dedication to supporting the livelihoods of local food producers and entrepreneurs (again prioritizing sustainable practices)
- the wish to contribute to a thriving local economy
- the mandate to foster community connections and build social capital among FM participants
- the eagerness to incorporate education and food literacy as central outcomes of the FM experience

Although these objectives may not have been framed in terms of sustainability, they reflect the findings of much of the literature analyzing alternatives to the global food system. As well, they reflect documented foundations of sustainability (Lyson, 2004).

Project Limitations and Evaluation

The research objective to investigate the range of operational approaches used by FMs across Ontario required that a broad sample group be included. However, for this project, participation in both the questionnaires and the interviews may not have provided a broad enough sample to give an accurate overview of Ontario FMs. FMO membership stands at 178 markets (as of March 2017), but this certainly does not cover all Ontario FMs. And of the 176 members listed when questionnaire data was collected, only 41 were able to be contacted and willing to take part. This may have been due to the timing of data collection, which took place in early spring, a time when many FM managers and administrators are swamped with preparations for the season. As well, because I limited my interview sample to FMO markets, and this sample was further limited to those willing to take the time to be interviewed, I did not achieve the diversity of participation that I would have liked. Indeed, markets that choose not to affiliate themselves with FMO may have contributed important insights for comparing the advantages and disadvantages of such affiliation. As well, I believe the inclusion of more FMs from northern Ontario and remote regions of the province would have provided a clearer picture of the unique challenges facing these markets. Finally, my data suggest that large and urban markets differ significantly in their operational approaches from small and rural markets, however this finding is based on a very small sample of markets fitting the large/urban characteristics (one) compared to those in the small/rural category (five).

The academic literature on FMs covers a significant range of sample sizes, from examinations of customer characteristics and motivations at a single FM (Baker, Hamshaw and Kolodinsky, 2009; Feagan and Morris, 2009), and in-depth comparisons of two or three FMs (Alkon and McCullen, 2010; Conner et al., 2009; Feagan, Morris and Krug, 2004) to broader analyses of the meaning of local food across 15 FMs (Smithers, Lamarche, and Joseph, 2008), and the impact of food choice values on customers at 28 markets (Connell, Smithers and Joseph, 2008). Accordingly, the sample sizes I used were comparable to other studies and were manageable, given time and travel constraints. Nevertheless, a larger sample group would have been better able to provide the more in-depth analysis that the research questions required.

Conversely, the sample size would have been appropriate had the research questions been narrower. In attempting to gather data pertaining to market governance, market management, and market relationships, it became clear that the scope of this inquiry would have been better suited to a longer, more ethnographic study. In order to delve more fully into these topics, I would have liked to spend time at each market, interviewing not just managers and administrators, but vendors and customers as well. Of course, time and travel limitations prevented this type of in-depth study. As a result, an alternative approach would have been to limit the scope of this project to one aspect of market operations (e.g. focus only on management structures and strategies) in order to fully explore the topic. As I analyzed the data, it occurred to me that each section of the interview just scratched the surface of an extremely complex system. As well, because the interview questions were open-ended, they gleaned a wide assortment of narratives from which it was difficult to draw any general conclusions. What came from these interviews were fascinating stories describing one perspective of FM operations, but my efforts to produce an academic analysis of comparison were limited by the diversity of data. In retrospect, I would narrow down the study and fine-tune the interview questions in order to draw forth responses that could more effectively be compared and contrasted. Alternatively, the data from this thesis could be considered stage one of a two-stage study, whereby the broad narratives gathered here could inform a more focused subsequent investigation.

Research Opportunities

Each of the sections of this thesis could be narrowed down and investigated more thoroughly. For example, FM governance could be considered in greater detail, and more specifically, the relationship between FMs and local government groups or external economic development organizations could be examined in terms of how these groups enhance or hinder FM operations. In my review of the literature and during data analysis, I noted several gaps in food systems research with respect to FMs. The following is a list of potential research directions:

- *Counting FMs*
    - In order to do relevant and thorough research on FMs in Ontario or Canada, it would be useful to have a more accurate sense of the number of FMs, their location, and their size. Brown (2001) has pointed out that a challenge facing FM researchers is the inconsistent definition and classification of FMs, making accurate counts unreliable.

The FMO affiliated markets are accounted for on the FMO website, and although their database may not be frequently updated (i.e. some of the contact information is out of date, and some listed markets have closed), the list gives a fairly accurate count of their member markets (Farmers' Markets Ontario, 2017). However, it is not the case that all FMs in Ontario are FMO markets. The government of Ontario's Local Food Report (OMAFRA, 2016), puts the provincial total at about 200 FMs, noting that the majority of these are FMO markets, but it is not clear how this total was determined, nor where these markets are located. The US Department of Agriculture keeps an updated database of FMs across the country, which includes location, hours of operation, product lists and links to market websites (USDA, 2017). It would be useful to count FMs in Canada this way, particularly because of the rise and fall of market prevalence outlined in Chapter 2. FMs are linked to the sustainability of local food systems, and their patterns of proliferation and decline respond to the activities of the global food system. As such, tracking FM performance could provide an important indicator of local food system resilience.

- *Resolving the Issues of Reselling and Local Importation*
    - As noted in Chapter 5, the resale of imported produce is usually prohibited at FMs, but many markets make specific allowances. Often this entails what is known as "local importation" (Smithers, Lamarche and Joseph, 2008, p. 346), or the sale of farm goods that

are not produced in the immediate vicinity but must be brought in to meet demand. Examples include the sale of peaches in areas with plant hardiness zones that don't support this crop, the sale of produce purchased at a food terminal to satisfy customers' desire for 'one-stop shopping', and the sale of produce from outside the local region in order to lengthen the market season by providing items customers expect to see in June and July. An investigation into the attitudes toward reselling and local importation found at FMs across the country could help shed light on this complicated issue. Such a study would consider the needs of vendors in agriculturally limited locations, as well as the demands and expectations of FM customers. While disallowing any and all reselling was rare in my sample group, the question remains as to the best way to approach allowances. This must be done in such a way that local producers are not undermined, customers are able to satisfy their shopping needs, and the market itself is viable over the length of the season (for seasonal FMs), and over the months when local production is scarce (for year-round FMs). My sense is that the FMs in my study struggle to find a compromise that satisfies all members of the market community. An examination of how individual markets manage this issue, various approaches to transparency, a look at how vendors are monitored, and the opinions of primary producers and customers on this issue would be widely beneficial.

- *Food Security and FMs*
    - The association of FMs with access to healthier, safer, more ethical food is at odds with their reputation for elitism and exclusivity. I propose that many FMs could make a greater contribution to food system sustainability by incorporating into their mandates access to local food for low-income and marginalized community members. Research could be undertaken to determine the most effective ways for FMs to address food security needs in a given community. In their 2011 Economic Impact Report, FMO noted the potential for FMs to promote equitable access to fresh, healthy food choices. However, the report does not delve any deeper than suggesting the creation of coupon programs and inclusive spaces to invite participation from lower income individuals and families (Farmers' Markets Ontario, 2011). Further consideration of such strategies could bridge the accessibility gap at FMs.
- *Food Elitism and FMs*
    - As mentioned above, FMs tend to be associated with high prices. However, there is some question as to the accuracy of this association, signifying an opportunity for deeper analysis. An investigation comparing the prices found at FMs across the country to prices for similar items found at supermarkets would help quantify this supposition. Such research may also allow us to understand the range of food prices at various FMs and the corresponding customer

profiles. Further, we may discover that many FMs are in fact working to overcome the association with exclusivity by incorporating strategies to improve access for low-income customers.

- *Food Literacy and FMs*
    - My data revealed that education is central to many FM mandates. I believe the need for this type of learning is only going to increase as the prevalence of fast and convenience foods continues to create a generation of people lacking culinary skills and basic nutritional knowledge. Food literacy is a relatively recent notion that refers to the "inter-related knowledge, skills and behaviours required to plan, manage, select, prepare and eat foods to meet needs and determine intake" (Vidgen and Gallegos, 2014). Looking into the various ways that FMs can help increase food literacy is worthy of more thorough investigation.
- *FMs and the Environment*
    - Although FMs are often assumed to offer more environmentally beneficial options than supermarket products, the literature continues to call this assumption into question (Greenbelt Farmers' Market Network, 2012; Mariola, 2008; Schnell, 2013). There are opportunities for academics to quantify the environmental impact of FMs by determining the degree to which markets help protect ecosystem services, promote sustainable agriculture, reduce packaging and food waste, and protect biodiversity.

In summary, while the information obtained for this thesis illuminated many of the questions I set out to answer, it inevitably revealed the need for more focused research into the ongoing evolution of the role of FMs in food system sustainability.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Questionnaire Protocol

Farmers' Market Questionnaire

The information being gathered in this questionnaire will be used as part of a research project examining the variety of operational strategies at farmers' markets across Ontario. This project is being done in collaboration with the Haliburton Farmers' Market Association and U-Links, a community-based research centre located in Minden, ON.

All information gathered will remain entirely confidential unless you specify otherwise. The final question of each section will give you the opportunity to indicate that you would like that section be confidential or disclosed.

Each question assumes your involvement in a single farmers' market. If you are involved with multiple markets, feel free to complete a separate questionnaire for each market, or simply choose one market.

Please complete and save the questionnaire and return the digital file via email to melissajohnston@trentu.ca. Please return the completed questionnaire by **Tuesday, March 29th.**

A: General Market Details

1. Your name:___________________________________
2. Market name:__________________________________
3. Year established:_______________________________
4. Months active:_________________________________
5. Weekly Market days/hours:_______________________
6. Does your market have a formalized mandate or constitution? ________
7. Confidentiality – please place an "x" next to one of the following:

    I agree to allow the information in section A to be disclosed _______
    I wish for the information in section A to remain confidential _______

B: Location

8. What city, county or region does your market operate in or near?

9. Please describe your market site (e.g. indoor, outdoor, on park grounds, in a parking lot, along a temporarily closed street, etc.):______________________________
____
____

10. Does your site location influence the market season length? If yes, please explain:
____
____
____
____

11. Does your location influence the number of vendors? If yes, please explain:
____
____
____
____

12. How would you characterize the agricultural performance in your region (agrarian, non-agrarian, rich soil, poor soil)?
____
____
____

13. Confidentiality – please place an "x" next to one of the following:

    I agree to allow the information in section B to be disclosed ______
    I wish for the information in section B to remain confidential ______

C: Governance and Management

14. What type of governing body directs your market (apart from FMO) (please place an "x" next to one of the following)?

    - ☐ Vendor Association _____
    - ☐ Board of Directors _____

- ☐ Municipality_____
- ☐ Steering Committee _____
- ☐ Business Improvement Area (BIA) _____
- ☐ Agricultural Society _____
- ☐ Chamber of Commerce _____
- ☐ no governing body _____
- ☐ other:____

15. Please indicate the duties of your market's governing body (please place an "x" next to all that apply):

- ☐ N/A (no governing body) _____
- ☐ recruit and train new Board members _____
- ☐ meet regularly to conduct the business of the organization _____
- ☐ manage the financial affairs of the organization _____
- ☐ contract services as needed _____
- ☐ negotiate location _____
- ☐ acquire physical resources (e.g. tents, tables, signage, etc.) _____
- ☐ establish membership criteria and review regularly _____
- ☐ review and update vendor rules and regulations annually _____
- ☐ fundraising _____
- ☐ promotions _____
- ☐ other:____
  ____

16. Does your market have a manager? ______________________

    If yes, is your market manager paid or volunteer? (please place an "x" next to one of the following:):

    - ☐ Paid _____
    - ☐ Volunteer _____

    If your market has more than one manager, please indicate # below:

17. What is your job title and role (please place an "x" next to all that apply)?

- ☐ market manager _____
- ☐ board member _____
- ☐ vendor _____
- ☐ volunteer _____
- ☐ other:_____________________________

18. What is the average number of hours/week you work in the above role:

a) from May-October:____________________________

b) from November-April:__________________________

19. Please indicate the duties performed by the market manager/administrator, if applicable (please place an “x” next to all that apply):

- ☐ review vendor applications and select vendors ____
- ☐ attend every market to ensure smooth operation _____
- ☐ liaise with market neighbours, landlords, stakeholders _____
- ☐ recruit volunteers _____
- ☐ resolve conflicts between and among vendors and customers _____
- ☐ collect vendor fees _____
- ☐ collect revenue data _____
- ☐ collect market survey material _____
- ☐ plan and oversee vendor meetings _____
- ☐ engage in promotional activities _____
- ☐ manage email and phone calls _____
- ☐ update website and/or social media sites _____
- ☐ attend Board meetings _____
- ☐ submit an annual report to a Board of Directors _____
- ☐ other:____
  ____
  ____

20. Confidentiality – please place an “x” next to one of the following:

I agree to allow the information in section C to be disclosed _____
I wish for the information in section C to remain confidential _____

D: Vendors

21. What is the typical number of vendors at your market (e.g. 12-15):

____

22. What is the optimal number of vendors for your market (given your site space and customer demand)?

____

23. How many vendors on average drop out of the market and how many new vendors are brought in each year?

____

24. How difficult is it to recruit local producers to your market on the following scale, where 0 indicates no difficulty and 5 indicates extreme difficulty:

____

25. On average, how far do your vendors typically travel to get to your market (please place an “x” next to one of the following)?

- ☐ < 10 km _____
- ☐ 11-30 km _____
- ☐ 31-100 km _____
- ☐ > 100 km _____

26. What is the ratio of primary producers (vendors who grow, raise, produce, bake and/or make their products) to resellers at your market?________________________

---

27. Confidentiality – please place an “x” next to one of the following:

I agree to allow the information in section D to be disclosed _____
I wish for the information in section D to remain confidential _____

E: Financial

28. Which of the following are included in your annual market expenses (please place an “x” next to all that apply):
    - ☐ insurance _____
    - ☐ rental of market site _____
    - ☐ equipment (tables, chairs, tents, etc.) _____
    - ☐ utilities _____
    - ☐ manager fees _____
    - ☐ promotion and advertising _____
    - ☐ research and customer surveys _____
    - ☐ outreach and volunteer recruitment _____
    - ☐ membership fees _____
    - ☐ other:__________________________

29. What are the sources of revenue for your market (please place an “x” next to all that apply)?

- ☐ vendor fees (annual) _____
- ☐ vendor fees (weekly _____
- ☐ donations _____
- ☐ government grants _____

- ☐ sponsorships _____
- ☐ N/A _____
- ☐ other:____

30. What do you charge vendors to sell at your market? Please describe the fee structure below (weekly? seasonal fee? etc.):

____

____

31. Confidentiality – please place an "x" next to one of the following:

I agree to allow the information in section E to be disclosed _____
I wish for the information in section E to remain confidential _____

F: Research and Development

32. Have you ever gathered data about the customers at your market? ____________

If yes, please indicate what information you gathered (please place an "x" next to one of the following):
- ☐ customer numbers _____
- ☐ customer demographics _____
- ☐ customer motivations _____
- ☐ customer satisfaction _____
- ☐ customer suggestions _____
- ☐ other:____
____

33. Can you give a rough estimate of the number of customers served over the season/year (if known)?_____________________________________

34. On average, how far do your customers typically travel to get to your market (please place an "x" next to one of the following)?

- ☐ < 10 km _____
- ☐ 11-30 km _____
- ☐ 31-100 km _____
- ☐ > 100 km _____
- ☐ unknown _____

35. Have you surveyed the vendors at your market? ________________

If yes, please indicate what information you gathered (please place an “x” next to one of the following):

- ☐ vendor characteristics _____
- ☐ vendor needs (in the context of the market) _____
- ☐ vendor motivations _____
- ☐ vendor revenues _____
- ☐ vendor business models _____
- ☐ vendor satisfaction (in the context of the market) _____
- ☐ other:____
  ____

36. What is the ratio of fruit and vegetable produce and value-added items made from that produce to other products (crafts, artisanal products, educational services, etc.)?

____

37. Confidentiality – please place an “x” next to one of the following:

I agree to allow the information in section F to be disclosed _____
I wish for the information in section F to remain confidential _____

G: Conclusion

Thank you for completing the first stage of this research project. The next step will involve interviews conducted either in person or by Skype or phone. These interviews are expected to take 60-90 minutes and will take place within the next two months. If you are interested in participating in an interview, please indicate below. Please note that a small sample of questionnaire participants will be selected for the next stage, and willingness to participate does not guarantee that you will be asked to take part in interviews.

I am willing to participate in an interview for this research project:

YES: _______ NO:_______

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Board at Trent University. You may contact them through Karen Mauro (Certifications and Regulatory Compliance Officer), Phone: 705-748-1011 ext. 7896, Email: kmauro@trentu.ca.

Appendix 2: Interview Protocol

Interview Questions

REB File #: 24137 - Approval date: February 25, 2016

Project title:
Cultivating Change: Classification and Optimization of Farmers' Markets in Ontario

Graduate Student Researcher:
Melissa Johnston, MA Candidate Sustainability Studies, Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario Email: melissajohnston@trentu.ca

The following are the questions and prompts used in my interviews. Participants were encouraged to expand on their answers and provide as much detail as they wished.

Interview – Questions and prompts:

1. What is your role within the farmers' market and how did you come to have that role?

2. How would you describe your market to a visitor or a new resident of your region?

3. Please describe the type of governance structure used at your market? (Prompts: not-for-profit, city-owned/operated, vendor-owned/operated, privately owned/operated, etc.)

4. Please describe the decision-making body that governs your market? (Prompts: Board of Directors, Vendor Association, Business Improvement Association, volunteer association, etc.)

5. To your knowledge, how/why did your market come to be governed this way?

6. What type of management structure is used at your market? (Prompts: none, volunteer/paid, full-time/part-time, seasonal/year-round, etc.)

7. To your knowledge, how/why did your market decide on this arrangement?

8. In what ways is this management structure working well, and how could it be improved?

9. Can you tell me a bit about your vendors? How do you go about recruiting vendors? How much vendor turnover do you experience each year, and what factors do you think influence this?

10. What motivates your vendors to sell at your farmers' market and what are some of the other marketing options they can consider? (Prompts: farm-gate sales, Community Shared Agriculture, other retail options, other farmers' markets)

11. How would you characterize your customer base? (Prompts: regulars, tourists, people who stumble upon the market, etc.)

12. In terms of customer loyalty, do you notice the same customers week after week or do you see new faces at each market?

13. How would you describe your customers' motivations for shopping at your farmers' market?

14. In your opinion, what are the overall values and objectives of your market? (Prompts: provide a market for local farmers, promote of local food, carry on a tradition, etc.)

15. What would you say is the greatest strength of your market? (Prompts: location, variety of products, unique character, convenience, size, historical legacy, etc.)

16. What would you say is the biggest challenge facing your market? (Prompts: stability of vendor pool, number of customers, space limitations, etc.)

17. Where do you see your farmers' market in the next 5-10 years? What future goals and developments are on the agenda?

The participants were thanked for their time and invited once again to contact me with any questions or concerns.